

HOW TO TRAIN A CHILD PHYSICALLY.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



HERE is no prettier sight, to our way of thinking, than that of three or four rosy-cheeked children at work on a hearty meal. Yes, I said "work," and I do not mean to correct myself, for if they be at all healthy, and consequently not at all over-dainty, and if they have had plenty of previous exercise, and unstinted running (out of doors), it will be no play, I assure you, but a downright labour of love. So I call it a pretty sight, albeit there may be a good deal of unscientific fencing, unnecessary slopping and face-smudging.

But how often, during a banquet like this, do we not hear such remarks as the following from an alarmed governess!—"Oh! Johnnie,

the other hand, please, the other hand. How often, child, do I not tell you that you must learn to eat with your *right* hand?"

Poor Johnnie has not been very long "on to" spoon-drill, and has been digging away indiscriminately, ere he attracted the gubernatorial eye, shifting the spoon from hand to hand, and doing equally grand execution with either. He now stares at the governess with round wondering eyes for a few brief seconds, trying perhaps to guess which is the right hand, or what harm the other hand has done, that it cannot be considered right as well as its neighbour. But dinner with him is far too serious a business to be interrupted by conversation, so he wastes no words, but goes on again plodding as before.

Well, although the laws of society demand that we should use both spoon and knife with the right hand, nevertheless poor Johnnie's actions must not be put down entirely to awkwardness; and, with the exception probably of what I have called spoon-drill, a child should be taught to use both hands alike, and with equal facility—to be, in other words, ambidextrous.

I have not space to enumerate the advantages a man or woman has, who is possessed of the power of ambidexterity. A person may study using the left hand as well as the right, in after-life, but he will never become so expert as if he had been used to it from childhood. The physical development of children is very much neglected in this country. I would not have young people grow up as athletes, but I would have them possess that amount of physical power which is compatible with good health and a sound constitution.

Such a training is sure to do them good service in some dire emergency.

First and foremost, then, do not expect your child to be capable of even ordinary training, unless he is in sound health, and unless he gets fair play in the momentous matters of cleanliness, good food, and fresh air.

I will say a word about cleanliness first. We all remember the proverb anent it, and it is a true one. From their very earliest infancy children should be kept cleanly, both in person and clothes, and as soon as they can toddle they should be taught to keep at least their fingers clean. I shall not here say anything physiologically about the benefits of cleanliness, and the health of the skin—I have done so in numerous articles—but merely say that no child can be healthy who retains effete matters *in* his blood or *on* his skin.

The bath should be a daily and not a weekly or Saturday night affair in every family, and those who can afford it should have a children's bath-room, under good supervision. For the water should neither be too hot nor too cold, but tepid, and if the child can bear it, almost cold. It ought to be taken in the morning before breakfast—it is ruinous putting a child into the water after a full meal—the body ought to be immediately rubbed dry and dressed, and after this, but not before, the child may be encouraged to romp or play, but no romping during the bath should be permitted if it tends to keep him in the water longer than is necessary for purposes of perfect ablution. The mildest of plain soap should be used.

I have known children taught the art of swimming to some extent in a large bath.

Children's clothes, as I have said before now, ought to be light and warm, easy-fitting; the feet should be kept warm by soft light socks, and the head cool. Never sweat a child by hot-water bathing, by over-clothing, nor in his bed at night, unless you want to make him a hot-house plant, to grow up puny in body and feeble in mind.

Out-door bathing for older children should be encouraged. Shade of my childhood! do I not remember those pre-prandial plunges in the mountain streamlet, and the scamper half-dressed along the banks that succeeded! Exhilarating, healthful, glorious!

Whole armies of children are sacrificed annually in this country to the demon foul air. And the altars on which they are immolated are the school-room, the nursery, and the bed-room. The Government school-room is a great institution for developing the minds of children, but—in many instances—woe is me for the health of their bodies! Let no one returning from a long walk in the country enter one, or pass too near the door thereof, while the children are at work. This evil could be easily remedied, however, by a process of scientific ventilation not dependent upon windows.

The nursery ought to be kept the perfection of cleanliness; the floor should be of wood, uncarpeted, and scrubbed almost every day, and the air within should be as pure as that without.

As to the child's bed-room or night-nursery, I almost despair to think of it, so seldom is it properly ventilated, and so often too small and stuffy.

Mothers, pray think of this, for assuredly your child's future health, nay, his very life itself depends more upon the air he breathes than on the food he eats.

I may only summarise the rules of health as regards the diet of children. Begin early, if the child be puny and weakly, to give a little strengthening pap, to which even a little beef-tea may be added with advantage. If, on the other hand, the child thrives well on the mother's milk, let it have that and nothing else till the careful time of weaning begins to approach. As soon as the teeth come, it is a sign that nature needs something more stimulating than milk. Very young and delicate children should only have the very lightest and most easily digested food, of an animal and vegetable kind in due proportion; frequent change of food is desirable and necessary; feed regularly and give, if possible, no intermediate meals of cake and pudding, &c. At meal-times the child must be taught to eat slowly, and take little bits at a time; do not let him over-gorge; give no wine, nor too much tea or coffee—I would say none at all, only I feel I should not be obeyed—give nothing too hot; give ripe juicy fruits in season.

Simple enough are these rules, and probably the reader knew them all before; but simple though they be, they are seldom acted up to.

All I need say about the sleep of infancy and childhood is very brief. When a child does not sleep well, depend upon it that his physical development is being retarded; and if there be no actual disease, the cause is want of attention to proper food, cleanliness and exercise, or a badly-ventilated apartment, with or without an ill-arranged bed. The rules, then, to be observed in order to gain for children sound refreshing sleep are briefly as follows:—First, send them early to bed, that is if you would have them grow up strong, well-developed youths and men. Nothing can be more injurious than the habit of letting them sit up late among their elders; and I may add that children's parties should never be prolonged beyond eight or half-past eight. At the very best I do not approve of them; they are neither conducive to the health of the child nor to his future well-being.

The sleep a child requires is greater than that needed by an adult, but still it should not be overdone. The quantity depends on the age; for a child of six, ten and a half hours would under ordinary circumstances be sufficient for needful repose. The bed-room should be large, clean, well-ventilated, kept at an equable temperature, and dark. Night-lights are objectionable, and injurious in more ways than one. The air should be very pure, and the bed-coverings light and warm.

Now, if all the hints I have already given in this short paper be adopted as a rule, the medicine-bottle in any shape or form need never find its way into the

nursery cabinet. A child who is not dosed with physic usually grows into a man who seldom or never needs it.

Exercise is the last but not least important portion of my subject to be treated. I suppose my first duty is to say a word or two about teaching children to walk; it may be said that all mothers know how to manage this perhaps, but they are often guilty of grave errors notwithstanding. Nature in this respect will not be forced. A young child's bones are soft and cartilaginous, and keeping a poor little thing tied up against a chair, when it ought to be lying on its back kicking the air and strengthening its limbs, or crawling on the nursery floor, is positively injurious and sinful. It is done, I know, with the view of teaching it all the sooner to maintain the erect attitude; but bent legs may be the result, and however strong a bent-legged man may be, he certainly does not look elegant. Let the child creep, then, and as soon as he finds that he can pull himself cautiously up, and stand by the side of a box, he will do so: this is the only safe and natural process. Soon after this he will, if encouraged, venture upon what parents call the first step. Let him creep, and when he walks and falls, laugh at him; unless you want to make the child an idiot, do not rush to pull him up. Children are not at all brittle, and they ought to learn at a very early age to depend upon the strength nature has endowed them with. Some nurses tie a band around a poor child's waist, and then shove him kicking and sprawling on before them, during which time the child looks as graceful as the golden lamb which hosiers hang out as a sign. The practice is *most* injurious.

As soon as children can run about they ought to be allowed to spend all the time possible in the open air, taking care not to let them get wet, and taking them home before nightfall.

I have often made the remark that work is not exercise, that exercise to be beneficial must be congenial to the mind, as well as the body, and this is doubly true as regards children. Encourage them to play therefore and romp *ad libitum*, and if possible find them companions of their own age. A boy brought up with only his sisters as playmates will usually turn out a soft and selfish man.

It is not a good thing to commence teaching a child to read too soon, but I beg humbly to differ from those who say they ought to be taught nothing until they are six. They should read and write tolerably well by the time they are seven. Great men, with few if any exceptions, have well-developed heads and brains. As far as size goes, the brain cannot be developed after the sutures of the skull close, and size of brain has a deal more to do with cleverness than many imagine—mind and matter cannot be separated. But never let children sit too long poring over their books; ten to one they are but dreaming or dozing and doing no good, but only weakening their frames and bending their spines.

Teach children to sit erect whether reading or sewing, but remember that they cannot keep them-

selves in any one position long at a time, however graceful it may be.

While play is good, running races is to many children highly dangerous, owing to its tendency to produce congestion of the brain, to which the young are far more liable than the old.

The swing is a capital thing for enlarging the muscles of the arms and chest. It is a kind of exercise, too, that is both pleasurable and exhilarating.

Rowing in boats is to be commended to older children. You may tell me it is dangerous. Well, it teaches caution, and it exercises the muscles of the eyeball, and if you talk of danger I have my answer—*teach your child to swim*. If I were to enumerate one-half the benefits to be derived from the exercise of swimming this paper would be far too long. In all exercise beware of over-fatigue and over-heating of the blood.

A JEWELLER'S STORY.

CHAPTER THE FIRST. MY JOURNEY.



I was on the 29th of October, 1859, that I was returning to England, having taken the steamer at Dublin for Holyhead. Business had taken me to Ireland—I am a jeweller—and it had been necessary for me to visit a branch of my own

firm in Dublin. I was bringing back certain valuable jewels which required re-setting—diamonds of great value, and some other things of less importance, but still valuable.

I found all the passengers talking on one subject—the terrible and appalling wreck which had occurred only three days before, off Moelfra, on the Anglesea coast. No less than 446 lives were lost that night when the *Royal Charter* was totally wrecked. She was a screw steamer, commanded by Captain Taylor. A large sum of money—£700,000 or £800,000 in gold—was lost also, it was supposed; but I have since heard that some of the gold has been recovered. I am a silent man habitually, and the awe in the voices of my fellow-passengers struck me forcibly; but I had another reason, as will presently appear, in remembering my journey from Dublin to London on this occasion.

I carried the jewels which I have already mentioned in a small black handbag, and so long as I knew that it was safe, I was free from care. Arriving at Holyhead, I took my seat in an empty first-class railway carriage. Just as the train was moving off, however, a gentleman suddenly got in. He sat down nearly opposite me, so I had a good opportunity of observing his appearance. I noticed that he was young, apparently not more than four-and-twenty, that he had a broad black band round his hat, and that on his face were traces

of recent sorrow, almost in fact of agitation. He seemed relieved at having caught the train; and being like myself quite disinclined for conversation, our journey proceeded in silence.

My bag lay beside me, and quite under my eyes. I was tired after my crossing, and fell into a sort of doze. On waking I instantly glanced at my bag. There it lay, quite safe. My companion, however, had moved his seat. We stopped at Chester, and here I thought I would get out and walk about a little, as we had ten minutes to wait. I took my bag and got out. On my return to the train there was my companion apparently asleep. I got into the carriage without disturbing him, and we continued our journey. At Crewe, our next stopping-place, he got out, and did not come back. I was very tired now, and fell into a sound sleep with my hand holding the handle of my black bag. I did not wake until we reached London, then getting into the first hansom I saw, and still carrying my precious bag of which I was heartily tired, I drove home. On my arrival, with a method which I suppose is habitual to a man in my trade, I instantly went to the safe in which I keep valuable jewels, unlocked it, and depositing the bag on a table, I opened it. Imagine my dismay at finding that, instead of my diamonds, it contained only some rusty bits of iron, and wooden débris. My bag was gone, this other bag had been cleverly substituted for it, so cleverly indeed that even the weight as well as the appearance had been judged.

I put the affair into the hands of the police, giving them exactly every particular as I have here written it. The bag was lost.

CHAPTER THE SECOND. MY SEARCH.

A YEAR after the events narrated in the last chapter, I was again travelling on the line which takes passengers to Holyhead. It was in the beginning of October as well as I remember.

I travelled first-class, my usual custom when I have a long journey before me. During the year, not a sign had been given of my missing bag or the jewels, but I had not really despaired yet of recovering it and them, for I had a certain unaccountable feeling about the whole thing; that there was some mystery about it, I felt sure.

Regularly every Wednesday in every week I had called at Scotland Yard, and always had the same