



Art—Educational.

MOTHER AND CHILD.

BY FLORENCE I. DUNCAN.

IN countries where standing armies are an institution, military men say that a soldier's son is born drilled. This significant observation may with as much propriety be applied to the son of the artisan as to the son of the soldier, ordinary military discipline being a mechanical art, requiring a low degree of skill for its acquisition. The continual observation of military manoeuvres and the natural habit of imitation exert such an influence on the child of the camp that almost imperceptibly it becomes an adept in the discipline of death; and the comparative perfection of his movements contrast so strongly with the clumsy evolutions of the untrained boor as to occasion this aphorism.

If the son of the artisan were as public a character as the son of the soldier, there is little question but his attainments, in a popular point of view, would also seem constitutional. The mechanic guilds of the middle ages evidently thought so, for, notwithstanding the exclusive character of their crafts, they awarded the artisan's son peculiar privileges; they recognized him as a regular member of the craft. Though a stranger to the servitude of apprenticeship, he departed from his father's house to his employer's workshop a journeyman mechanic; and no instance is recorded where his deficiency of skill disgraced his privilege of caste.

Why is the skill of the English operative at a premium in every country on the continent of Europe? Solely in consequence of his peculiar training. There are few boys in the English manufacturing districts who have not acquired the elements of several arts, before they arrived at the age of sixteen, by assisting the skilled workmen. Indeed many manufacturing operations could not be properly performed by individuals beyond that age. Generally, before an English boy is apprenticed to a regular trade, he has passed through several degrees of an industrial education, acquired by working in several manufactories. Unfortunately this industrial skill is, in general, acquired at the expense of intellectual instruction; but, if both were combined, the efficiency of each would be incomparably increased.

As a mother's work of education begins as soon as her baby stretches out his hand for a red ribbon, the surroundings of the children in the furnishing of a house has no slight influence in imparting that assimilated essence of knowledge which we term culture. In the household era, the memorable weeks marked by the sway of that necessary evil the monthly nurse, anecdotes are related, cases are dilated upon of occurrences which "marked" Mrs. Blank's baby. Among this unfortunately ignorant class pre-natal influences are a part of their creed; they bring to bear their personal experience among families for the last ten years, probably among one hundred families; but it is always some terrible occurrence—a grievous blight that is dwelt upon.

There are those who believe that bright colors and graceful forms have just as beneficial influences as dreadful impressions have baleful effects. A young wife once entered the amateur class of the School of Design for Women during the first years of its adoption by the Cooper Institute, who

attracted the attention of the students by saying: "I have come to learn by watching. My hands cannot do much."

She asked one of the students, who had been instrumental in collecting a small art-library for the use of the school, and who was the voluntary librarian, to choose for her something on art to read.

"But in what direction do you wish to study? What do you intend to do?"

"I shall do nothing. I wish my child to desire refined things."

"How old is the child?"

"I am hoping," she said, with a strong German accent, "and while I wait these long months I wish to learn, so that it shall come with a desire to learn of paintings and books. My husband and I have money, and our child shall not live for money alone. It shall be an educated American; for that the child must be born with a wish for learning."

The first toys have an educational value, and should be selected of the best shape, though they need not be the most expensive. There are some toys which, although now cheap, were termed, in Maria Edgeworth's stories, "Philosophical Toys," as they illustrate some philosophical principle. A scrap-book is of the greatest assistance in entertaining children for an hour at a time. A good scrap-book may be bought for fifty cents, and the sheets of colored pictures which have been so widely and absurdly used in covering clay vases, may be had for five cents each. In these, animals, birds, insects, fishes, and butterflies, have their scientific names printed in small letters; the coloring is vivid but not flashy, and they are generally well drawn. Paste them, from time to time, in the scrap-book, and if you find a small picture in a newspaper well drawn and interesting to the child, paste that in also. Then, beside, there are pretty labels and tickets on muslins and dress stuffs. Use your fancy, never forgetting your common-sense, in the selection of the pictures for your child's scrap-book. Paste no caricatures in it; you are dealing with a more impressible substance than wax. In supplying amusements for your child—sights which sink indelibly in his brain—his eyes should not become acquainted with monstrosities drawn for political effect. It does not matter for what good end the caricature is done—it should be kept away from the children. A child cannot comprehend state events or political moves, but he does see the human face distorted, the human figure deformed. It is like allowing weeds to grow in your garden before your plants have large enough roots to get sustenance much below the surface of the earth.

If your child is a girl, you are anxious that her sense of color shall be sufficiently developed to dress tastefully, to furnish her house well when she is a woman. If a boy, it is important that his sense of color should aid him if he is to be a manufacturer, or a naturalist, or a geologist. In short, no better way for fitting children to be useful citizens, to work with head or hands, to preserve them from folly or wasted lives, is there than training their perceptions now, in their infantile or childish days. The sense of color is very active among children; it is partly owing to the defects of our primary education that so many men are color-blind. The sense of color and the perception of form are not the only good that can be given a child with a scrap-book. When he is old enough to paste the pictures in the scrap-book himself, you can develop whatever faculty of combination he has. Our Patent Office reports show the American skill in mechanical combination of several well-known objects for a new purpose. If the knowledge of drawing was as diffused as the understanding of mechanism—if the sight of statues were as familiar as steam-engines, mowing and

sewing machines—is it not reasonable to suppose that we would not stay behind, as a people, *all the civilized* and half the barbarous world over long? For we are now, be it remembered, *behind*. You wish your child to be on a level with a European child in this respect? No need to send him to Europe to accomplish this, but act on European ideas in art and education here.

A curious experiment was once tried in England, which illustrates the educational effect of scrap-books. When Charles Swain, the "Manchester poet," a little dazzled by the attention of lords and ladies, had let his printing establishment run down, he found it impossible to pay for a designer, and his chief assistant, an enthusiastic disciple of Robert Owen, proposed trying what could be done with boys. The designs were made by selecting from the numerous scrap-books belonging to the establishment, bits by bits, combining the forms into different designs, and employing a man who could draw to fill in the odd spaces. The boys were selected to paste as part of their training; the other labor of the printing-office was carefully divided, and, under the incessant generalship of Swain's young assistant, the time of debt and difficulty was bridged over, but not before "Swain's men" had become a popular puzzle to other Manchester printers. And it was found that the boy applicants who were selected and taught were all Irish. The English boys were dismissed, they did not learn fast enough. Quick perception and a natural love of beauty is a characteristic of the Irish and French. We know what the development of art and national taste has done for French manufactures, and we have read how their artisans in their government works have been educated, but the experiment alluded to was with uneducated boys in a lithographic printing-office.

The educational value of one or two good plaster casts in a house full of children is hardly recognized. In one of the best private schools in New York, where preparing young ladies to profit by a future visit to Europe is one of the objects of their training, there are plaster casts not alone in the hall and drawing-room, but in every classroom. The children learn the outlines of the human figure; they see that a woman's figure is beautifully delicate, a man's, strong and graceful; it cultivates a sense of form and a good foundation of modesty. Curiosity is the appetite of the mind, hide anything obviously and you provoke curiosity. On the other hand, do not run into extremes; nudity is not necessarily beauty. Sixty years ago a statue was exhibited in New York at certain hours to gentlemen, and at certain hours to ladies, *when the statue was draped with white muslin*. Now, some mothers, feeling the reaction against the undeveloped sense of beauty of half a century ago, have had their darling babies photographed with drapery only in the background. As a maternal souvenir this is one thing, but when their photographs are placed on tables in the drawing-room, and given to artistic visitors to admire, it becomes ridiculous; neither extreme is the proper atmosphere for a child. A statue worthy of the name is never a portrait of any one person's figure. It is a type of that style of beauty, just as *this type you are reading now is a kind of English letters*. It is not a *fac-simile* of any person's writing. We charge a child not to talk of family affairs in the street—it is unwise, improper; just so about the nude baby photograph. If you buy a plaster cast of some antique, explain to the child that the Greeks worshiped an unknown God. They considered beauty a manifestation of the unknown, not locating the soul in any special part of the body. An arm or a foot was the object of as much care to the sculptor as the head. When they forgot the ideal in the worship of the natural their art became sensual, and the best period of Greek art

was when the human figure was a symbol of the Unknown Source of all Beauty.

There are some children to whom the sight of a plaster cast is torture. The absence of color to them seems monstrous. They have not been accustomed to seeing casts at home, and it is almost impossible, and certainly unwise, to make them draw plaster casts when sufficiently advanced to do so at school. Photographs are a cheap educational medium, and serve the double purpose of furnishing the walls of the house, and awaking the ideas of the children. You know how fond boys are of building blocks at home, and of watching the masons at work in the streets; a photograph of the Greek Parthenon and the Roman Coliseum will serve to increase his knowledge. You thus point out to him the characteristics of Greek architecture—simplicity and beauty—and of the Roman—grandeur, pomp, and splendor. You may buy photographs of pictures of modern painters at any price from ten cents to twenty dollars. The antotypes and heliotypes from old masters are more expensive. A good plan is to have a specimen of the different methods of reproducing pictures on the wall, not only photographs and steel engravings, but wood-cuts, photo-, litho-, mono-, and chromo-graphs.

Few children, fortunately, are born bookworms, but all "want to see;" therefore the education which is observed through the eye has a large influence in individual development. If in the home the eyes have only uninteresting objects to dwell upon, it has the same effect on the eye as on the stomach if it has been fed with tasteless food. In buying books for children be careful that the pictures are well drawn and well colored. Instead of buying a multitude, which "it will not matter if the children tear," insist on books being taken care of by them in their infancy, or that dreadful trait of vulgarity—abuse of books—will mark the child when grown up.

Circulating libraries are good in their way, but no one road, be it ever so broad and well paved, can go in every direction; a library book is not of the same use to your sons and daughters as a book that you own, and may refer to at any moment, and the habit of comparing while studying or reading, or looking over the newspaper, is of great importance if education is to be a weapon of defense in the battle of life. Newspaper articles on art are only *one man's opinion*, and too often not only a not too well-informed man, but one not strictly conscientious. The articles on science used to be as unreliable as the most of articles on art and technical education are now, though we are justly proud of the American press.

The newspaper calls your attention to the events of the day; but bear in mind that there are more than one side to a question, and in order that children may not grow up one-sided, buy books.

It is often urged that if you attempt to sell books again you get little for them, as an argument against accumulating books. How much do you get for second-hand clothes? The clothes wear out, while books, with proper care, need not wear out. Is it not a fact that few families, where the daughters have a fifty-dollar dress once a year, buy a ten-dollar book after the Bible and the dictionary? The glittering generalities that mark men's speech is owing partly to this phase in our households. Teach the children by example that there are other books which help you, as the dictionary helps to express yourself, and to more thoroughly understand what you have seen or read.

Properly selected, the bric-à-brac at home gives interest to a geography or added zest to a chemistry lesson, for "China" and pottery represent the art-industry of different nationalities, and their attainment in chemistry as well as in manufacture. One of the most subtle powers of the human mind

is that of association. In order to give a man grasp of his subject he must not have isolated facts, but the power of grouping them together so as to associate them in the minds of his hearers with the idea he wishes to convey. The less you have traveled, the farther you are from a city where the shop windows vie with each other in products of different countries, the more is the need of a home growth of ideas. And the mother who lives in a city will wisely not enroll herself among those who behind their backs are called "studio bores," in her pursuit of art-culture. Artists are not always the best persons to help her out of preliminary ignorance; in fact they often laugh at the pursuit of art by women, forgetting that so long as motherhood is intrusted to women, just in proportion it is not a trifle to preserve the least flickering flame of taste which a child may inherit. If she asks for information honestly, she fares better with a scientific man than with an artist. The latter has the same qualities she has—quick perception, impressibility, imagination—but her ignorance perplexes him; there is no place for him to begin, no one spot, of dry land; all is sea. Unless she is very pretty, and he is very patient, she has simply taken up his time. Another difficulty is that most American artists are self-taught, and they are unable to put themselves in her place. The scientific man is aware of the popular ignorance, and is pleased or amused at her rapid conclusions. Let her learn herself from books and from scientific men to say, "I don't know," and so manage that whatever the accessories beyond the necessities of life be in her home, they shall lead her children to "want to know," a power which must increase and multiply.

Novelties for Mantel and Table Decoration.

For some time past, art has turned to account the beauty of shells, and recent decoration of the conch and nautilus shell, as well as the common oyster and clam shell, with beautiful water-color landscapes and marine views, as well as delicate figure-subjects, has made many of these desirable for household ornamentation. But the latest importations are the most original and elaborate. These represent French peasants, a few inches in height and breadth, and colored with the utmost nicety, then set at half length into the hollow of fine shells, of which the spiral rests upon a pedestal, also, like the figures themselves, of highly tinted *terra cotta*.

Figures of *terra incotta*—which leaves the clay at its natural hues—are also imported, as well as tinted figures representing infant children seated in little straw chairs—which are however of the clay, as well as the comical dolls or rebellious poodles they are nursing. Larger figures, as high as two feet, and elaborately colored in full tint, represent ragged French soldiers or *Directoire* groups in costume.

Pomegranate "trees" are of silver, having six branches not unlike taper-bearers, but furnished with glass cups into which the ripe pomegranate is set. Out of the birds' claws which make the support rises a circle of silver, into which are dropped small, long-handled spoons, which are intended to scoop out the pulp of the fruit during the process of eating. Filled with either pomegranates or oranges, these "trees" are a pretty table-ornament, the idea of fruit-bearing being carried out by a cluster of chased leaves upon each embranchment of the support of the cups.

A similar idea is found in the silver-wire baskets for green figs, of which epicures are so fond, and

which are lately to be found on many tables, taking the place of Barbary figs. These baskets have an enwreathing of silver fig-leaves, and a plain cake-basket may be made to look as tempting by arranging the fig-leaves from the trees themselves above the fruit.

A beautiful fig-basket has a reclining figure of Cleopatra on the flat and heavy handle, and this is so placed that with one hand the fair Egyptian seems to be withdrawing a slender asp from the figs below. The basket is square, and supported on the back of a crouching slave.

A new pastille burner represents a laboratory furnace with an alembic of crystal. In the miniature alembic is placed the pastille, and below it a match will quickly give it fire. The perfumed smoke then rises through the glass and removes from the apartment the peculiar and unhealthy odor that will always be found where a house has been closed for any time, and which, it is said, is a frequent and often unguessed cause of typhoid and diphtheria.

FEATHER WORK FROM SOUTH AMERICA.—The wonders of art in the specialty of their feather-work produced by the Indians of the Nacre tribe on the Magdalena river are little known. The marvelous correctness of proportion and of color, the poetic harmony of grouping in miniature landscapes, giving glimpses of quaint yet lovely spots in the scenery which serves these so-called savages as model, and their delicacy of manipulation cannot fail to strike the well-versed in art and the ignorant alike with absolute amazement. Fancy a landscape of some six or eight inches in breadth and in length, in which area willow, a lake, a sky, a stork, a butterfly and a humming-bird, all in correct color, correct outline, correct proportion and correct position, and made of feathers so minute that to manipulate one of the tiny plumes would seem to require the careful labor of at least an hour! These *savages* are certainly sentimentalists when they take up work like this to produce such indisputable perfection.

From the Emerald Mine's vicinities come the superbly mounted butterflies—*Morpho Lulkowsky*—called Opal or Nacre butterflies, of a transparent color resembling mother-of-pearl in tone, and with widely expanded wings. But the most beautiful of the South American butterflies is the wonderful blue *Morpho Keppris*, found only near Bogo, in the Republic of New Granada. This insect, whose wide wings measure from three to five inches, presents a color at the same time transparent and vivid, of the most exquisite azure, and having a surface glittering as from high polish.

Enormous and superbly-hued beetles, mounted with rare skill and marked with singular beauty and variety, come to us from the same source, and are in their way as beautiful. Humming-birds, so mounted that their wings may be arranged as if pendant or upright, closed or expanded, and comprising the tiniest as well as the largest of a species never exceeding five or six inches in length to three in breadth, form a portion of the carefully selected collection herein described, among the wonders of which are feather-flowers, excelling any previously brought here from South America, yet never going beyond the model afforded in the vivid flora of the country from which they come.

Again, fans of white feather, upon which is laid fluffy and cloudlike plumage of an intensely bright scarlet, and upon that superposed a tiny bird against a group of flowers, also of feather, are rivaled only by splendid garlands of glowing birds and blossoms, all alike arranged with surpassing taste and skill.

Added to these South American marvels are Hindoo caskets of wrought sandal-wood, caskets of ebony inlaid with platina, a curious Oriental jewelry of shape rare and singular, rare agates, selected emeralds and dainty bits of *vertu*, all