

SELF-MODELLING.

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As an end, debasing; as a means, ennobling. That is to say, one who seeks self-improvement for the sake finally of self is doomed to disappointment, while as a means it is not only a success but a duty. There is, and amongst girls especially, an introspection that is morbid and injurious in its results, hence the injunctions to forget oneself, to think only of others and similar trite aphorisms; but is there not on the other hand an introspection that is healthful and helpful, nay, essential to true progress, and hence the motto has rung true throughout succeeding ages, "Know thyself."

The laureate puts into the lips of the goddess of wisdom this very thought.

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control. These three lead up to sovereign power. Self-reverence, the spirit in which we act; self-knowledge, the object we seek; self-control, the result we attain.

We write then to those girls who would "perfect themselves in the fear of God" and say, be not deterred from seeking true self-knowledge by any cant phrases or second-hand maxims. Pray not Burns' prayer, "To see yourselves as others see you," but rather the simple cry of the little Scotch maid, "Lord, show me myself." Suffer egoism for a while, so that altruism be the end. Make self a study that you may be able rightly to forget self. Learn your weak points that you may strengthen them; your strong ones that you may strengthen others; your besetting sin that you may lay it aside; your leading gifts and talents that you may lay them at the Master's feet.

In the spirit, therefore, of pure altruism of entire unselfishness, let the subject of this article be self and nothing but self; let us be wholly egoistic conscious of the purity of our aim, and not to be deterred by platitudes from aught that can fit us better for the service of God or mankind. For self-modelling these things at least are needed. First, we must thoroughly understand the materials with which we have to work, and in short, ourselves. Secondly, we must be equipped with all the tools needed for self-modelling, and understand their uses, and what they can do and what they cannot; and lastly, we must have clearly before us the model or object that we are to copy, in short, the end before us in our arduous task.

Γνωθε τέναντον. Consider carefully in the dual light of heredity and education what you are in vice and virtue, in weakness and strength, physically, mentally, morally and spiritually. Let no part escape, probe the depths, measure the heights. The more accurate and true you survey and estimate, the more sure are the results. If you mistake building clay for china clay, and try and make fine pottery out of the former you fail, and do not even turn out a decent brick. If you are only a cottage piano and mistake yourself for a trichord grand, you will ever be disappointed with the music; but on the other hand, if you think you are but deal when you have the green of oak or walnut, you will fall far short of your destiny in what you construct. Over-estimation is wrong; but under-estimation is as bad, and perhaps among girls quite as common. Pray for truth; not in this case for humility, still less for pride, but for light and truth. Consider your ancestry and search carefully for their besetting sins in yourself. Consider your

childhood and surroundings, and look out for the points that such environment would be likely to produce, but get at all costs an exact and true knowledge of the girl that you see before you in the looking-glass. Consider your body, its strong and weak points, where it may be improved, and where it is already up to the mark. Your mind; how many unfurnished apartments it still contains, what parts have been developed, what left fallow. Your morals; in what respect you are careless and indifferent, and in what you excel. And lastly, your spiritual condition; how far are you truly a child of God? How far an earnest Christian? How far are your objects high and noble? How far do you carry out in life what you believe in heart? Let all this be done, I say again, in private without a trace of morbidity, truth and truth only being the object before you. Do not use the microscope to one part of your character, and the diminishing glass to another. It is difficult with oneself to get at a right focal distance to see clearly; we are apt to magnify and minimise. This must be carefully guarded against or it produces morbidity which is ever the result of untruth, and never of fact. Let each trait be seen in its due proportion and bearing with other parts of the character, and lastly, when you have studied all the details, look at the whole; and thus first by analysis and then by synthesis, you arrive at the truth. And lastly, do not forget that the object before you in the glass is feminine clay after all, and remember and despise not the limitations of sex.

Girls are physically weaker than boys, and increasingly so as they grow older. In many respects, the body of a woman is to that of a man as seven is to ten, that is in many things physically seven men are as ten women; not in all things, of course. Indeed, in some parts such as the tongue, one might almost say the proportions are reversed!

The separation of the sphere of the sexes is no mere survival of tradition. The physical beauty of the woman is not that of the man, as anyone can see in statuary, who compares the rugged strength of the one with the smooth and flowery outlines of the other. Veils are of use, though so essentially feminine, in helping to preserve their soft cheeks, which though the beauty of the woman, are no part of it in the man.

The difference between men and women is no outcome of tyranny of the stronger over the weaker sex, or of false education, but is a law of nature. The character of mind, too, is essentially different. If you hear half-a-dozen women talking freely together, you will find their conversation is essentially personal; if you hear half-a-dozen men you will find their talk is as often as not on subjects of general interest and often of an abstract nature, and but seldom laden with personalities. In the mind feminine there is a fineness of perception and a quickness, a mental action that is wanting in men. Man trusts in arguments founded on reason, woman in perception based on instinct.

It must, of course, be remembered that we speak of women who are women, for occasionally the sexes are mixed, and we get a truly masculine soul in a woman's body, and on the other hand a woman's soul in a man's body. Instances of both will readily occur to us, but cannot be considered when we write for the "rules" and not for the "exceptions."

Man still does all the active work of the world, and not only executes it but plans it. Indeed it is remarkable to observe that in spite of the so-called advance of women for

so many years how little grip they have got of the real business of the age. There is a domain, however, where they reign supreme. Women make the home which without them is a barrack. It is absolutely impossible to conceive of a home where there is no woman.

It is then that many women looking at examination lists and recent feminine successes, are misled into the idea that women are gradually acquiring a mental superiority over men. Such is not the case. In examinations women often come out better than men, but then the women are picked, whereas the men are average. It is easy to get an increase in the amount of knowledge, but even when acquired the difference in its use and application at once betrays the distinction between the masculine and feminine mind. We are amongst those, we trust not the minority, who believe that it would not be in any way to the advantage of women to be put all round on an equal footing with man. We believe that a woman's constitution is, on the whole, the natural result of her destiny.

Having then completed our self-investigation and made due allowance for the limitations imposed by the "eternal feminine," let us next consider what is to be our end, and aim, and object and model before we speak lastly of our tools and methods.

The first point to settle is, are we going to be married or single; and inasmuch as leap year does not come every twelve months, and as the woman has not, as a rule, got the real power of choice, the doubt that necessarily clouds this important point often somewhat paralyses efforts at self-modelling. That amount of modelling which simply goes to perfect the woman or a woman, may of course be successfully pursued in either case; but when we come to specialise her for more particular work or calling, it is then that the difficulty comes in. Here then must women be inevitably handicapped. The boy can prepare from his earliest years for a definite calling in life, which he steadily pursues, whether married or not, whereas the woman does not willingly undertake the drudgery of preparing for a calling which, after all, she secretly hopes she may never enter, as marriage of course would stop her professional career in nine cases out of ten. There is nothing so paralysing as uncertainty, and inasmuch as it is, and we trust ever will be, the province of the man to provide for the woman and not the woman for the man, so we think it will ever be the more important parts of self-modelling to produce the characteristics of the perfect woman, than the special qualities required for particular professions.

Still as there are women, thousands of them, who have to lead single lives, it is well to consider the question of special callings. These are of two sorts—paid and unpaid. Among the former is journalism, art, music, authorship, medicine, the drama, nursing, teaching, clerical work, public appointments, postal and telegraphic work, shop-keeping of all sorts, and many more. In most of them a woman can at any rate keep herself, but for nearly all she requires specialised training, varying in time from a few weeks to five or six years; and the portals of the more important are everywhere guarded by examinations.

Unpaid work is naturally inspired by either love of God or man. In the former case it is religious, in the latter philanthropic. Often it partakes of both objects and characters. It includes, as seen in the list of women's work displayed at the Chicago Exhibition, and published in the official record: work amongst children, young ladies, working girls, boys,

men, societies and guilds, ragged-schools, navvys, church work, religious work outside the church of all sorts, slum work, rescue work, nursing, needlework, porcelain work, scientific work, work amongst soldiers, sailors, police, etc.

All these mean real hard work, often of a most trying and disagreeable nature. All require to be well done, and many, as in the paid varieties, require long periods of preparation. It has been said that nine-tenths of the world's work is drudgery, it is the quality of the tenth part that makes it divine.

Let us now consider the tools requisite for self-modelling. Most of these can be better and more efficiently used by our parents on us in tender years. The clay has now got tough in condition and set in shape, and there is not a little undoing needed as well as building up. Besides it is always more difficult to mould yourself than to be moulded by another. We are now beyond parental moulding, but not beyond God's hands. Let each one then who undertakes this work reverently ask her Heavenly Father to do that higher part of the work that lies beyond her own powers.

In the formation of habit a girl has a most powerful tool for self-modelling at her disposal. The force of habit is great, and may be so formed as to be difficult to check. Darwin found he had acquired, in common with most men, the habit of starting back at the sudden approach of danger, and no amount of will-power could enable him to keep his face pressed against the plate-glass front of the cage of the cobra in the Zoo while it struck at him, even though he exerted the full force of his will, and his reason told him there was no danger. The Duke of Wellington is credited with the dictum that habit is as strong as ten natures, and certainly when one sees what a soldier will do and is worth in a campaign when seasoned and well drilled, as compared with a raw recruit, he feels that the statement is rather under than over the mark, for he owes all his valour to habit! Habit is formed by the constant repetition of the same thought or act till a well-defined brain-path is formed between the groups of brain-cells concerned in its production. In the graphic language of Dr. Michael Foster, "The will, blundering at first in the maze of the nervous network, gradually establishes (by repetition) easy paths. Whenever this is effected the slightest impulse seems to start the nerve-current along the whole of the associated groups and produces the habitual action. The

nerve-current follows this route not now because it is guided (as at first) by intelligence, but because this route offers the least resistance from habitual use."

Attention in the formation of the habit seems greatly to deepen its impression on the brain, and make it much more easy to establish. A good memory, which is a psychical habit, is thus established by attention.

The easiest time to form habits is in the growing brain in early childhood, notably before fifteen years of age. As, however, my readers have passed this age, let me add that the brain still remains sufficiently plastic till thirty (which is, as we know, amongst women a magic age which continually recedes the nearer you approach it) for the formation of permanent habits. After that age, they are made with much difficulty, and are easily forgotten again, the brain being then better compared to india-rubber than clay. As a rule personal habits are acquired before twenty, professional habits before thirty. The old adage,

If at first you don't succeed,
Try, try, try again,

simply means: if a thing is too hard to do, establish a habit and you will accomplish it. Habits of thought are as truly and readily formed as habits of body.

Attention may be deliberately manufactured as a habit by the inattentive. The habit of inquiry is easily acquired, and simply means going through life with one's eyes open instead of shut.

In a similar way most moral habits can be formed as mental habits, deliberately, surely, and easily, as compared with any other method. Thus decision, self-control, obedience, self-respect, unselfishness, courtesy, reverence, can one and all be formed by frequent repetition in early life. The knowledge and love of their moral value gives of course the will to form them and greatly helps the process. Habit forms character, or at least a good deal of it. The perfected woman is largely a creature of perfectly formed habits. Up to a certain point our character was formed for us by heredity and education, beyond this it is formed by us by habit.

Many good habits are acquired at school. The habit of steady application; the habit of accurate thought is largely taught by the study of mathematics, and is of great value to girls who are seldom just or accurate, because their feelings and impulses are so strong. In using,

therefore, the tool in self-modelling, the plan is, having grasped the subject (oneself) and the object (one's aim), to fix the mind on the most besetting sin or failure first, and carefully establish a habit that shall overcome it. It is easier to choke out a bad weed by planting a flower that shall overshadow it, than to uproot it. Then take the next most prominent, and so steadily overcome and put to death not the vices and failures as a whole, but in detail, concentrating your forces on each in turn, and establishing in every case a good habit of the corresponding virtue in its place. Observe how scriptural is this principle. "Lay aside the sin that doth most easily beset you," and as regards the cultivation of the corresponding virtue: "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, etc." "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good," and in each case the vice is to be supplanted by a virtue.

Another powerful tool is the occupation of the mind with what is good. "Whatsoever things are pure, noble, of good repute, etc., think on these things." We get like whatever we are occupied with. We are like photographic plates partly sensitised, that dimly reproduce what they are placed before. Let us have lofty ideals and be ever occupied with them, and our character is then changed. This is a power quite different from that of habit-forming, but the method is equally recognised in Scripture. "We all . . . reflecting as in a mirror" (or sensitive-plate) "the glory of the Lord are changed from glory to glory," or as it has been rendered, "from character to character," "by the Spirit of the Lord."

Another tool is to have good teachers. The best teachers are best; and in self-modelling no second-rate work must be done. The Bible comes first, next all those voices living and dead that are God-sent, and capable of inspiring in us those virtues that we lack.

Coming down at last to the body, we use all and every means to develop it in grace, in strength, in beauty, and in health. And thus the knowledge of ourselves, so far from filling us with fatalism and morbidness, is the sure foundation on which we stand, and seek to build from the unworthy materials at our disposal, by habit, by precept, by example, by good methods, a better woman than she is girl, one whose path is upward and not downward, and whose last word ever is, however high the position she may attain, "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thy name be all glory and praise."

TAME DOVES.



It is always interesting to note how gentleness shown towards our pet animals and birds will bring out various traits of

character in them.

Curious differences will be observed even between specimens which are of the same age and family and have been treated exactly alike from their earliest years.

A pet creature can only show its true nature when it is brought up so kindly as to be without fear. Alas, how seldom this is the case!

Almost all captive song-birds I have seen, excepting canaries, are sure to flutter more or less when anyone approaches their cage,

and this instinctive effort to escape shows timidity and unhappiness. I confess I could never find any pleasure in keeping a tiny captive which I knew was breaking its little heart in fruitless longings for fresh air and liberty.

To show what thoughtful kindness will do in creating happy confidence, I should like to relate the history of my tame doves, Peace and Patience.

These birds used to belong to a poor woman in our village, her only means of housing them was in a wooden box with a wire front. It was a wonder that they continued to live in such discomfort; yet, without a bath, a nest-box, or anything to make their lives pleasant or healthy, they showed the grace of patient endurance by living on with merely their bare allowance of food and water.

However, they were redeemed at last from their hard bondage, placed in a large wicker cage with plenty of suitable provender, enabled

to sun themselves in a pleasant verandah, and to take a bath in pure water whenever they felt inclined.

Their plumage soon began to improve, and became as smooth and soft as grey satin.

After a time they were let out to fly about in the dining-room, and the male bird, Peace, might often be seen sitting on the marble clock gazing at himself in the looking-glass over the mantel-piece. I suppose he admired his own reflection, for he would go again and again to bow and curtsy and coo most lovingly to the bird he saw in the glass, and never seemed to find out it was himself all the while.

In spite of this foppishness he was a most devoted mate, paying all kinds of tender attentions to his gentle little wife, following her about and often feeding her with any special dainty he might come across.

Under these new and happy circumstances Peace and Patience began to think of rearing