CONCERNING CHILDREN AS PERSONS[1]

LIBERTY *VERSUS* VARIOUS FORMS OF TYRANNY

By CHARLOTTE M. MASON

The mystery of a *person*, indeed, is ever divine, to him that has a sense for the godlike.— Carlyle

We live by admiration, hope and love!
And even as these are well and wisely fixed,
In dignity of being, we ascend.—Wordsworth

I

The Mystery of a Person

Some of us can recall our surprise when we read in *The Times* years ago of the discoveries made by German explorers on the site of the first capital of Assyria. Layard had long ago made us familiar with temples and palaces; but we hardly expected to learn that every house, even the smallest, appears to have contained a bath. In like manner, we are astonished to read of the great irrigation works accomplished by the people of Mexico before Cortés introduced them to our eastern world. We are surprised to find that the literature and art of ancient China are things to be taken seriously. It is worthwhile to consider why this sort of naïve surprise awakes in us when we hear of a nation that has not come under the influence of western civilisation competing with us on our own lines. The reason is, perhaps, that we regard a person as a product, and have a sort of unconscious formula, something like this: Given such and such conditions of civilisation and education, and we shall have such and such a result, with variations. When we find the result without the conditions we presuppose, why, then we are surprised! We do realise what Carlyle calls, "The mystery of a person," and therefore, we do not see that the possibility of high intellectual attainments, amazing mechanical works, rests with the persons of any nation. Therefore, we need not be surprised at the achievements of nations in the far past, or in remote countries which have not had what we consider our great advantages. This concept, of the mystery of a person, is very wholesome and necessary for us in these days; if we even attempted to realise it, we should not blunder as we do in our efforts at social reform, at

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education, at international relations. Pope's hackneyed line would come to us with new force, and it would be a mere matter of course that,

The proper study of mankind is man.

The mystery of a person is indeed divine, and the extraordinary fascination of history lies in the fact that this divine mystery continually surprises us in unexpected places. Like Jacob, we cry, before the sympathy of the savage, the courtesy of the boor: "Behold, God is in this place and I knew it not." We attempt to define a person, the most common place person we know, but he will not submit to bounds; some unexpected beauty of nature breaks out; we find he is not what we thought, and begin to suspect that every person exceeds our power of measurement.

I believe that the first article of a valid educational creed—"children are born persons"—is of a revolutionary character; for what is a revolution but a complete reversal of attitude? And by the time, say, in another decade or two, that we have taken in this single idea, we shall find that we have turned round, reversed our attitude towards children not only in a few particulars, but completely.

Wordsworth had glimmerings of the truth: poets mean, not less, but a great deal more than they say; and when the poet says, "Thou best philosopher," "Thou eye among the blind," "haunted forever by the eternal mind," "Prophet, Seer blest," and so on—phrases that we all know by heart, but how many of us realise?
—we may rest assured that he is not using poetical verbiage, but is making what was in his eyes a vain endeavour to express the immensity of a person, and the greater immensity of the little child, not any of whose vast estate is as yet mortgaged, but all of it is there for his advantage and his profit, with no inimical Chancellor of the Exchequer to levy taxes and require returns. But perhaps this latter statement is not correct; perhaps the land-tax on the Child's Estate is really inevitable, and it rests with us parents and elders to investigate the property and furnish the returns.

Wordsworth did not search an unexplored field when he discovered the child. Thomas Traherne, a much earlier poet, is, I think, more convincing than he; because, though we cannot look back upon our child

selves as Seers and Prophets and Philosophers, we can remember quite well the time when all children were to us “golden boys and girls;” when there was a glamour over trees and houses, men and women; when stars and clouds and birds were not only delights, but possessions; when every effort of strength or skill, the throwing of a stone or the wielding of a brush, was a delight to behold and attempt; when our hearts and arms were stretched out to all the world, and loving and smiling seemed to us the natural behaviour of everybody. As for possessions, what a joy was a pebble or a

cork, or a bit of coloured glass, a marble or a bit of string! The glamour of its first invention lay upon everything we saw and touched. God and the angels, men and women, boys and girls, the earth and the sky, all belonged to us with an ineffable sense of possession. If we doubt all this, even though a glimmering conviction come to us in the pauses of our thought, why, it requires very little interpretative power to see it in the serenity and superiority of any normal baby child.

How like an angel I came down!
How bright are all things here!
When first among His works I did appear,
Oh how their Glory me did crown!
The world resembled His Eternity
In which my soul did walk;
And everything that I did see
Did with me talk.
The skies in their magnificence,
The lively, lovely air;
Oh how divine, how soft, how sweet, how fair! The
stars did entertain my sense,
And all the works of God, so bright and pure, So
rich and great did seem,
As if they ever must endure
In my esteem.

The streets were paved with golden stones,
The boys and girls were mine,
Oh how did all their lovely faces shine!
The sons of men were holy ones,

In joy and beauty they appeared to me,
And everything which here I found,
Which like an angel I did see,
Adorned the ground. — Traherne

We remember the divine warning, "See that ye despise not one of these little ones;" but the words convey little definite meaning to us. What we call "science" is too much with us. We must either reverence or despise children; and while we regard them as incomplete and undeveloped beings, who will one day arrive at the completeness of man rather than as weak and ignorant *persons*, whose ignorance we must inform and whose weakness we must support, but whose potentialities are as

great as our own, we cannot do otherwise than despise children, however kindly or even tenderly we commit the offence.

As soon as he gets words with which to communicate with us, a child lets us know that he thinks with surprising clearness and directness, that he sees with a closeness of observation that we have long ago lost, that he enjoys and that he sorrows with an intensity we have long ceased to experience, that he loves with an *abandon* and a confidence which, alas, we do not share, that he imagines with a fecundity no artist among us can approach, that he acquires intellectual knowledge and mechanical skill at a rate so amazing that, could the infants's rate of progress be kept up to manhood, he would surely appropriate the whole field of knowledge in a single lifetime.

Do we ask for confirmation of what may seem to some of us an absurdly exaggerated statement of a child's powers and progress? Consider: in two or three years, he learns to speak a language—perhaps two—idiomatically and correctly, and often with a surprising literary fitness in the use of words. He accustoms himself to an unexplored region, and learns to distinguish between far and near, the flat and the round, hot and cold, hard and soft, and fifty other properties belonging to matter new to his experience. He learns to recognise innumerable objects by their colour, form, consistency, by what signs, indeed, we know not. As for the mechanical skill he acquires, what is the most cultivated singing as compared with articulation and the management of the speaking voice? What are skating and skiing compared with the monstrously difficult art of balancing one's body, planting one's feet and directing one's legs in the art

of walking? But how soon it is acquired, and the unsteady walk becomes an easy run! As for his power of loving, any mother can tell us how her baby loves her long before he is able to say her name, how he hangs upon her eye, basks in her smile, and dances in the joy of her presence. These are things everybody knows; and for the very reason, nobody realises the wonder of this rapid progress in the art of living, nor augurs from it that a child, even an infant child, is no contemptible person judged by any of the standards we apply to his elders. He can accomplish more than any of us could in a given time, and, supposing we could start fair with him in the arts he practises, he would be a long way ahead of us by the end of his second year. Let us consider a child as he is, not tracing him either, with Wordsworth, to the heights above, or, with the evolutionist, to the depths below; because a person is a *mystery*; that is, we *cannot* explain him or account for him, but must accept him as he is.

What else does the world do but accept a child as a matter of course? And is it not faddists who trouble themselves with his origins? But are we not going too fast? Do we really accept children as persons, differentiated from men and women by their weaknesses, which we must cherish and support; by their immeasurable ignorances, which we must instruct; by that beautiful indefinite thing which we call

the innocence of children and suppose in a vague way to be freedom from the evil ways of grown-up people. But children are greedy, passionate, cruel, deceitful, in many ways more open to blame than their elders; and, for all that, they are innocent. To cherish in them that quality which we call innocence, and Christ describes as the *humility* of little children, is perhaps, the most difficult and important task set before us. If we would keep a child innocent, we must deliver him from the oppression of various forms of tyranny.

II

SOME FORMS OF LIBERTY

If we ask ourselves, What is the most inalienable and sacred right of a person *quâ* person? I suppose the answer is, liberty. Children are persons; *ergo*, children must have liberty. Parents have suspected as much for a generation or two, and have been at pains not “to interfere” with their children; but our loose habits of thinking come in our way, and in the very

act of giving their freedom to children as impose fetters which will keep them enslaved all their lives. That is because we confound liberty with license and do not perceive that the two cannot coexist. We all know that the anarchist, the man who claims to live without rule, to be a law unto himself, is in reality the slave to certain illogical *formulae*, which he holds binding upon him as laws of life and death. In like manner, the mother does not always perceive that, when she gives her child leave to do things forbidden, to sit up half an hour beyond his bedtime, not to do geography or Latin because he hates that subject, to have a second or a third helping because he likes the pudding, she is taking from the child the wide liberty of impersonal law and imposing upon him her own ordering, which is, in the last resort, the *child's* will. It is he who is bending his mother as that proverbial twig is bent, and he is not at all deluded by the oracular "we'll see," with which the mother tries to cover her retreat. The child who has learned that, by persistent demands, he can get leave to do what he will, and have what he likes, whether he do so by means of stormy outcries or by his bewitching, wheedling ways, becomes the most pitiable of all slaves, the slave to chance desires; he will live to say with the poet:

> Me this unchartered freedom tires;
> I feel the weight of chance desires.

Indeed, he already feels this weight, and that is why he is fretful and discontented and finds so little that is delightful in his life. Let him learn that "do as you're bid" is a child's first duty; that the life of his home is organised on a few such

injunctions as "be true," "be kind," "be courteous," "be punctual," and that to fail in any of these respects is unworthy and unbecoming; more, let him be assured that such failures are of the nature of sin and are displeasing to God , and he will grow up to find pleasure in obedience, and will gradually gather the principles which should guide his life.

But the first duty of the parent is to teach children the meaning of *must*; and the reason why some persons in authority fail to obtain prompt and cheerful obedience from their children is that they do not recognise "must" in their own lives. They *elect* to do this and that, *choose* to go here and there, have kindly instincts and benevolent emotions, but are unaware of the constraining *must*, which should direct their speech and control their actions. They allow themselves to do what they choose; there may be little

harm in what they do; the harm is that they feel free to allow themselves.

Now, the parent who is not aware that he is living in "eat the fruit of his thoughts" as well as that of his words and actions, is unable to get obedience from his child. He believes that it rests with him to say what the child *may* do or leave undone; and as he does not claim papal infallibility, his children find out soon enough that the ordering of their lives is in their own hands, and that a little persistence will get them "leave" to do what is good in their own eyes. People discuss the value of corporal punishment and think they see in it the way to get obedient children. It may be so, because obedience must be learned in the first three or four years of life, when the smart of a little slap arrests the child's attention, brings tears and changes his thoughts. As a matter of fact, it is hardly possible to punish some children unless while they are quite young, because the pleasure of displaying bravado under the excitement of the punishment occupies the child's attention to the exclusion of the fault for which he is punished. But the whole discussion is outside the question. The parent, the mother especially, who holds that her children's rule of life must be, "children obey your parents for it is *right*," certainly secures obedience, as she secures personal cleanliness, or proper habits at table, because she has a strong sense of the importance of these things. As her reward, she gains for her child the liberty of a free man, who is not under bondage to his own wilfulness nor the victim of his own chance desires.

The liberty of the person who can make himself do what he ought is the first of the rights that children claim as *persons*. The next article in the child's Bill of Rights is that liberty which we call innocence, and which we find described in the Gospels as humility. When we come to think of it, we do not seesaw a little child is humble; he is neither proud nor humble, we say; he does not think of himself at all: here we have hit unconsciously upon the solution of the problem. Humility, that childish quality which is so infinitely attractive, consists in not thinking of oneself at

all. That is how children come, and how in some homes they grow up; but do we do nothing to make them self-conscious, do we never admire pretty curls or pretty frocks? Do we never even *look* our admiration at the lovely creatures, who read us intuitively before they can speak? Poor little souls, it is sad how soon they may be made to lose the beauty of their primal state, and learn to manifest the vulgarity of display. I wonder would it not help us in this matter to copy the pretty custom taught to some continental children?

The little girl who kisses the hand of an elder lady, with a pretty curtsey, is put into the attitude proper for a child, that is, she is paying attention and not receiving it. The lady-visitor, too, is taught her place; we do not lavish loud admiration on children at the moment when they are showing deference to us; but this is a detail. The principle is, I think, that an individual fall of man takes place when a child becomes aware of himself; listens as if he were not heeding to his mother's tales of his smartness or goodness, and watches for the next chance when he may display himself. The children hardly deserve to be blamed at all. The man who lights on a nugget has nothing like to exciting a surprise as has the child who becomes aware of himself. The moment when he says to himself, "It is I," is a great one for him, and he exhibits his discovery whenever he gets a chance; that is, he repeats the little performance which has excited his mother's admiration, and invents new ways of showing off. Presently, his self-consciousness takes the form of shyness, and we school him diligently, "What will Mrs. So-and-so think of a boy who does not look her in the face?" or "What do you think? General Jones says that Bob is learning to hold himself like a man." And Bob struts about with great dignity. Then we seek occasions of display for children, the dance, the children's party, the little play in which they act, all harmless and wholesome, it it were not for the comments of the grown-ups and the admiration conveyed by loving eyes. By-and-by comes the *mauvaise honte* of adolescence. "Certainly the boys and girls are not conceited now," we say; and indeed, poor young things, they are simply consumed with self-consciousness, are aware of their hands and feet, their shoulders and their hair, and cannot forget themselves for a moment in any society but that of everyday. Our system of education fosters self-consciousness. We are proud that our boy distinguishes himself, but it would be well for the young scholar if the winning of distinctions for *himself* were not put before him as a definite object. But "where's the harm after all?" we ask; "this sort of self consciousness is a venial fault and almost universal amongst the young." We can only see the seriousness of this failing from two points of view—that of Him who has said, "it is not the will of the Father that one of these little ones should perish;" and that, I take it, means that it is not the divine will that children should lost their distinctive quality, innocence, or humility, or what we sometimes call simplicity of character. We know there are people who do not use it, who remain simple and direct in thought, and young in heart, throughout life; but we let ourselves off easily

and say, “Ah, yes, these are happily constitute people, who do not seem to feel the anxieties of life.” The fact is, these take their times as they come, without undue self-occupation. To approach the question from a second point of view, the havoc wrought on nerves is largely due to this self-consciousness, more often distressing than pleasing, and the fertile cause of depression, morbidity, melancholia, the whole wretched train which make shipwreck of many a promising life.

Our work in securing children freedom from this tyranny must be positive as well as negative; it is not enough that we abstain from look or word likely to turn a child’s thought upon himself, but we must make him master of his inheritance and give him many delightful things to think of: “*la terre appartient à l’infant, toujours à l’infant*,” said Maxim Gorky at an educational congress held in Brussels years ago. So it does; the earth beneath and heaven above; and, what is more, as the bird has wings to cleave the air with, so has the child all the powers necessary wherewith to realise and appropriate all knowledge, all beauty and all goodness. Find out ways to give him all his rights, and he (and more especially *she*) will not allow himself to be troubled with himself. Whoever heard of a morbid naturalist or a historian who (save for physical causes) suffered from melancholia? There is a great deliverance to be wrought in this direction, and sentry duty falls heavily on the soldier engaged in this way.

The tyranny of self crops up in another place. The self-conscious child is very likely generous, and the selfish child is not noticeably self-conscious. He is under the tyranny of a natural desire—acquisitiveness, the desire of possession, covetousness, avarice—and he is quite indifferent and callous to the desires and claims of other people. But I need not say much about a tyranny which every mother finds ways to hold in check; only this we must bear in mind: there is never a time in the child’s life when his selfishness does not matter. We are indebted to the novelist who has produced for us that fascinating baby, “Beppino,” and has shown how the pretty, selfish, wilfulness of the child develops into the vicious callousness of the man . Selfishness is a tyranny hard to escape from; but some [2] knowledge of human nature, of the fact that the child has, naturally, other desires than those that tend to self-gratification—that he loves to be loved, for example, and that he loves to know, that he loves to serve and loves to give—will help his parents to restore the balance of his qualities and deliver the child from becoming the slave of his own selfishness. Shame and loss and deprivation should do something where more generous motives fail; and more powerful than these is a strong practical faith that the selfish child need not become, and is not

intended to become, a selfish man or woman.

Joseph Vance, by William de Morgan. [2]

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another liberty we must vindicate for children is freedom of thought. I do not mean that youth should grow up like the young Shelley, chafing against the bondage of religion and law, but, rather, that, supposing all his world were "freethinkers," he should still have freedom of mind, liberty of thought, to reject the popular belief. Public opinion exerts, in fact, an insufferable bondage, and most of us sympathise with the assertion of the individual's right to think for himself. It is a right which should be safeguarded for every child, because his mind is his glorious possession; and a mind that does not think, and think its own thoughts, is as a paralysed arm or a blind eye. "But," we say, "young people run away with such wild notions: it is really necessary to teach them what to think about men and movements, books and art, about the questions of the day." To teach them what to think is an easy rôle, easy for them and for us; and that is how we get stereotyped classes instead of individual persons, and how we and the children fail to perform the most important function of life—the function of right thinking. We exaggerate the importance of right doing, which may be merely mimetic, but the importance of thinking and of right thinking cannot be overstated. To secure that a child shall think, we need not exercise ourselves in setting him conundrums; thinking is like digestion, an involuntary operation for healthy organs. Our real concern is that children should have a good and regular supply of mind-stuff to think upon; that they should become intimate with great men through the books and works of art they have left us, the best part of themselves. Thought breeds thought; children familiar with great thoughts take as naturally to thinking for themselves as the well-nourished body takes to growing; and we must bear in mind that growth, physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, is the sole end of education. Children, who have been made free of the Republic of Letters are not carried away by the *dernier cri*, are not, in fact, the slaves of other people's opinions, but do their fair share of that thinking which is their due service to the State.

the last tyranny that we can consider is that of superstition. We have a notion that education delivers us from this bondage; but superstition is a subtle foe and retreats from one fortress only to ensconce himself in another. We do not lay claim to higher culture than the Greeks or even the

Romans possessed; indeed, various nations of antiquity could give us points highly cultivated as we think ourselves; but it is a curious fact that no nation whose records we possess has been able to deliver itself by literature or art, or highest cultivation, from the hideous bondage of superstition. The tragedies of Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, have all of them a single appalling theme, the arbitrary and reckless play of the gods upon human fortunes. Indeed, it has been well said that tragedy in a Christian age is impossible, because the hopelessness of any situation implies the ill-will of the gods; and it is cited in this connection that of Shakespeare's three great tragedies two are

laid in pre-Christian times, and the third is brought about by a non-Christian person. This consideration throws an interesting light upon the whole subject of superstition. We do not impugn the gods any longer, but we say hard things of fate, destiny and the like; Napoleon III is far from being the only "man of destiny." We consult crystals, hold séances, have lucky and unlucky days, read our fortunes in our palms; even astrology is practised among us; and we believe ourselves to behalf
in play and hardly perceive the hold that superstition is gaining upon us. The fact would seem to be that a human being is so made that he must have religion or a substitute for it; and that substitute, whatever form it take, is superstition, whose power to degrade and handicap a life cannot be over-estimated. If we would not have our children open to terrors which are very awful to the young, our resource is to give the the knowledge of God, and "the truth shall make them free." It is necessary to make children know themselves for spirits, that they may realise how easy and necessary is the access of the divine Spirit to their spirits, how an intimate Friend is with them, unseen, all through their days, how the Almighty is about them to cherish and protect, how the powers of darkness cannot approach them, safe in the keeping of their "Almighty Lover."

I have considered several types of tyranny, none of which are external to the person, but all act within the bounds of his own personality, for—

The mind is its own place and in itself Can make a hell of heaven, a heaven of hell";

The heaven being, I suppose, when the man is at peace with himself and when his powers are freely and wisely exercised; the hell when the person is under no interior government and his powers are allowed to run to

anarchy and confusion. Parents and teachers may aid and abet with state of things, so much so, that if a child's place is a well-ordered heaven, he has to thank them for this happy state; and if he is condemned to a "hell" of unrest, fiery desires and resentments, are his parents without blame?

III

THE SPIRITUAL SUSTENANCE PROPER FOR CHILDREN

So far, I have considered the negative attitude of parents and those *in loco parentis*; but there is a positive side also, and here Wordsworth's well-known lines come to our aid:

We live by Admiration, Hope and Love! 10

And even as those are well and wisely fixed, In dignity of Being we ascend.

Ruskin has made us familiar with the first of these lines, but the remaining two are full of guidance and instruction. It takes a poet to discern why it is especially by the performance of these functions that we live. Admiration, reverent pleasure, delight, praise, adoration, worship; we know how the soul takes wings to herself when she admires and how veritably she sales the heavens when she adores. We know, too, how the provincial attitude of mind, *nil admirari*, paralyses imagination and relaxes effort. We have all cried, "Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell in the tents of Beseech," the Beseech of the commonplace where people do not think great thoughts or do noble acts, and where beauty is not. Our dull days drag themselves through, but we can hardly be said to live; wherefore, all praise to the poet who perceived the vital character of admiration. But Hope—what is the good of Hope! Practical people connect it with castles in Spain and other intangible possessions. If we are to know how far we live by hope, how far it is bread of life to us, we must go where hope is not. Dante understood. He found written upon the gates of Hell: "*Lasciate ogni Esperanza vol ch'entrate*." The prisoner who has no hope of release, the man with the mortal sickness who has no hope of recovery, the family which has had to abandon hope for its dearest, these know, by the loss of hope, that it is by hope we live. Our God is described as "The God of Hope;" we might get through many a dark day if we realised this, and that hope is a real if not tablible possession, which, like all the best things, we

can ask for and have. Let us try to conceive the possibility of going through a single day without any hope for this life or the next; and a sudden deadness falls upon our spirits, because "we live by hope."

But we live by Love, also; by the love we give and the love we receive, by the countless tendernesses that go out from us and the countless kindnesses that come to us; by the love of our neighbour and the love of our God. As all love implies a giving and a receiving, it is not necessary to divide currents that meet. We do not ask what makes us happy, but we are happy, abounding in life, until some single channel of love and goodwill is obstructed, someone has given us offence or received offence at our hands, and at once life runs low within us. We go languid and devoid of pleasure, we are no longer fully alive, because we live by love; not by a consuming and unreasonable affection for any individual, but by the ongoing of love from using all directions and the intaking of love from all sources. And this is not a state of violent and excited feeling, but is placid and continuous as an act of breathing: thus we receive into us the love of God, and th8s our own hearts go out in answering love. "We live by admiration, hope and love," and without these three we do not live. And what is the consummation? According to Wordsworth, "a

gradual ascent in dignity of being." We see into and then in beautiful old age, serene, wise, sweet, quick to admire, ready to hope against hope, and always to love. But there is an intermediate stage. These three, which are identical with the three of which St. Paul says, "now abideth these three," must be well and wisely fixed; and here is the task set before us who are appointed to bring up the young.

It is the cause of great perplexity to parents and guardians that young people will fix their admiration upon, pin their faith to, unworthy objects, whether these be the companions they go with, the heroes they delight in, the books they read, the amusements they see,. Unworthy or little worthy admirations keep them in a state of excitement which they mistake for life; and the worst of it is we can do nothing. If we depreciate what they admire, they put it down to our niggard and ungenerous nature and take no heed of our strictures. Our only course is to forestall their fervours about worthless things, by occupying the place with that which is worthy. We cannot say to a boy, "Thou shalt not admire such and such a comrade," but we can occasionally put a nice boy in his way and say nothing about it: so with books and men; we cannot cause them to admire, but we can admire ourselves with spontaneous heartiness and simplicity. They begin to wonder

shy, to admire also, or to find out for themselves a hero or author equally worthy of admiration. Two things we must beware of: we may not talk much about the matter or the boy will say we "gas;" we may not be obtrusive, but we must be consistent; and we may not allow ourselves in admiration for the second-rate performance, seeking a second-rate person for the sake of his wealth or position, the boy believes that we are tacitly professing a higher standard than we hold; older persons will make allowance and will understand that we do care for the best things, though now and then we content ourselves with the second-best; but children are exigent. "We needs must love the highest when we see it," and our business is to get young people to see the highest in life and letters, in conduct and motive, without boring them. All this sounds more difficult than it is, because children accept the unexpressed standard of their homes and schools. If we give our admiration, our faith, to "whatsoever things are lovely and of good report," if we "think on these things," and not on things unworthy, which we are free to depreciate, we shall be in a fair way to fix "well and wisely" the admiration of the young people.

I have said that faith is an interchangeable term for admiration. Faith also implies the fixed regard which leads to recognition, and the recognition which leads to appreciation; and when our admiration, our faith, is fixed on the Highest, appreciation becomes worship, adoration, I know I am touching upon a subject about which many parents and teachers experience anxiety and diffidence. God, faith in God, is the vital thing, and it is truly that which they are most anxious that their children should possess, but they are shy of speaking about what they have

most at heart. I think it would help us if we realised that at no time in their lives are children ignorant of God, that the ground is always prepared for this seed, and that our only care need be to avoid platitudes and hackneyed expressions, and speak with the freshness and devour of our own convictions. I think we might make more use than we do of the habit of meditation as a means of attaining to the knowledge of God.

If we get some notion as to how to fix the admiration of our young people well and wisely, we are still vague about hope. But it is necessary that we should clear our thoughts, because, perhaps, the great failure of the age we live in is a failure in hope. It is for lack of hope that we do not in patience wait for an end, or with assiduity work for it. It is because of our failure those that we do not build, or plan, or write, for the generations to come. We live for the present, work for the present, and must have

immediate returns. We live by hope, says the poet, which means that without hope we do not live; and that there is not life enough for our living is the secret consciousness of everyone. Therefore, we run after change, excitement, amusement, anything that promises to "pass the time." Therefore our interests are feeble, our aims low. Without hope, too, there is no fear. We may pray with our lips, "Give us an heart to love and dread thee," but we do not dread, and upon quite slight provocation men take leave of the life that has been lent them for a purpose. A straw shows which way the current flows, and that a novelist should have conceived the ideas of a hotel convenient for "unostentatious suicide" is a distressing symptom of our ailment. No great works are accomplished by a people without hope. Nations, like persons, have their times of sickness and health; and because promise rests with the young it is worth while to enquire into the causes of this deep-seated disease. They are partly physical, no doubt; we are an overstrained, nervous generation; but the means we should take to cure ourselves morally would remove our physical disabilities too. We want a tonic of Hope "well and wisely fixed," and we must bring up young people upon this tonic.

Now, it is exceedingly easy for us to gratify all a child's desires immediately and on the spot. It is so easy to compass this little treat and that, to arrange that every day shall have its treat or its new possession, that the children get used to it and grow up with the habit of constant gratification and without any practice of hope. Even the birthday is forestalled a hundred times in the year, and everything comes—not to him who waits, but to him who wants. We can, at any rate, bring up children in hope, see to it that they wait and work for the bicycle, or the book, or the birthday treat, that they have things to look forward to. Let us feed them with tales of high endeavour and great accomplishment, let them share our distress about those things which are blots upon our national life, nourish them on the hope that they themselves may do something to make England good and great; show that it is always a single person here or there, from time to time, who raises the

nation to higher levels and gives the rest of us something to live up to; that the person who makes a country great may be a poor girl like Grace Darling, or a peasant like Robert Burns, or a retiring gentlewoman like Florence Nightingale, or the son of a labouring man like George Stephenson; that the only conditions required are fitness, preparation and readiness. We all know how Florence Nightingale prepared and trained

herself for a career which did not exist until she made it. The young person who knows that there are great chances of serving his country in wait for those who are ready for them, and that his concern is not to seek the chance but simply to be ready when it arises, lives a life of hope and endeavour, and will certainly be a profitable citizen to the community.

There is a reason for our hopelessness deeper-seated than the nervous depression and anxiety which beset us, the present gratifications for which we lay ourselves out, or the personal aims which invalidate our efforts. Without hope, we live on a low level, disturbing ourselves with petty cares, distracting ourselves with petty joys. The difficulty is a very real one. We recite, week by week that "we believe int he life everlasting," but, in this keenly scientific age, we ask, "What is the life everlasting?" and no answer reaches us. It may be that, in proportion as we make a serious attempt to realise that we are spirits; that knowledge, the knowledge of God, is the ineffable reward set before us; that there is no hint given us of change in place, but only of change of state; that, conceivably, the works we have begun, the interests we have established, the labours for others which we have understand, the loves which constrain us—may still be our occupation in the unseen life—it may be that, with such a possibility before us, we shall spend our days with added seriousness and endeavour, and with a great unspeakable Hope.

But, if we would fix such hopes was these well and wisely in the hearts of children, we must think, pray, rectify. Our own conceptions of life present and to come; so may we arrive at a great Hope for the children and ourselves; and our emergence from the Slough of Despond shall be into a higher life.

We live by Admiration, Hope and Love. Here, surely all is spontaneous and easy, requiring no effort on our part; and happy is the person, say we, who gets enough love to live upon. But love insist not in getting but in giving, and is distinguished from the tumult of the affections which we commonly so name. Love is, life life, a state, an abiding state, says St. Paul, who has portrayed the divine Charity in such wise that there can never be anything to add whether in conception or practice. If we hope to guide children so that they may well and wisely fix their love, it is necessary that we should give some definite thought to the subject, be clear in our minds as to what we mean by love and how we are to get the power of loving, or rather how we are to keep it, for we have seen that the little child loves freely. "Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three." I venture to think that of the three abiding states, if we have lapsed from faith and hope, we yet abide in love.

Our neighbour becomes more precious to us; the more he is distressed and uneasy, the more we care for him and labour for his relief; perhaps, indeed, the passion for philanthropy is the feature by which our age will be known in history. "Write me as one who loves his fellow men"—may we figure this poor faulty age of ours as offering in extenuation for many shortcomings? Let us be tankful and see to it that the children share in this gift of their age. But, because our philanthropy is not always sanctified or instructed, sentimental humanitarianism becomes our danger. None shall endure hardness, is our decree; none shall suffer; especially, none shall suffer for wrong-doing; and we are in arms against the righteous severity of God and man. Let us "think clear," that we correct this attitude of mind in ourselves and for the children. Let us return to the old paths and perceive that life is disciplinary for us and others; that "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world;" that suffering in the present life is no such might thing after all; nor, if we go on with our lives, is it so great a thing to be divested of the flesh. If we ourselves love those things which be lovely, why, love is contagious, and the children will do as we do. But we must not only love wisely and well; we must fix our love. Here, I think, is a caution for using these days of passing enthusiasms, engrossing fads; and we really an do a great deal towards forming the habit of steadfastness in the young people about us.

We have now considered, however inadequately, the greatness of the child as a person, the liberty that is due to him as a person, some forms of oppression which interfere with his proper liberty (most of which come upon him from within), and the aliment which he is to live by—Admiration, Hope and Love. We have seen that, though we cannot make a hold eat, it is our business to put the proper food in his way; and, I think, it must come home to us all that the duty of taking thought, understand, realising, is that which presses upon ; it is only that which we understand that we an communicate; and what we understand, are really impressed by, we cannot fail to communicate, because it becomes ourselves, manifest in our speech and action. "Who is sufficient for these things?" we cry with the Apostle; but with him we may add, "I think my God."

Let me close by repeating again Carlyle's great words: "The mystery of a Person, indeed, is ever divine, to him that has a sense of the God-like; and that wonderful saying of Wordsworth's, which wraps in small compass for our use the secret of how to keep the mystery of a "Person" inviolate:

We live by Admiration, Hope and Love!