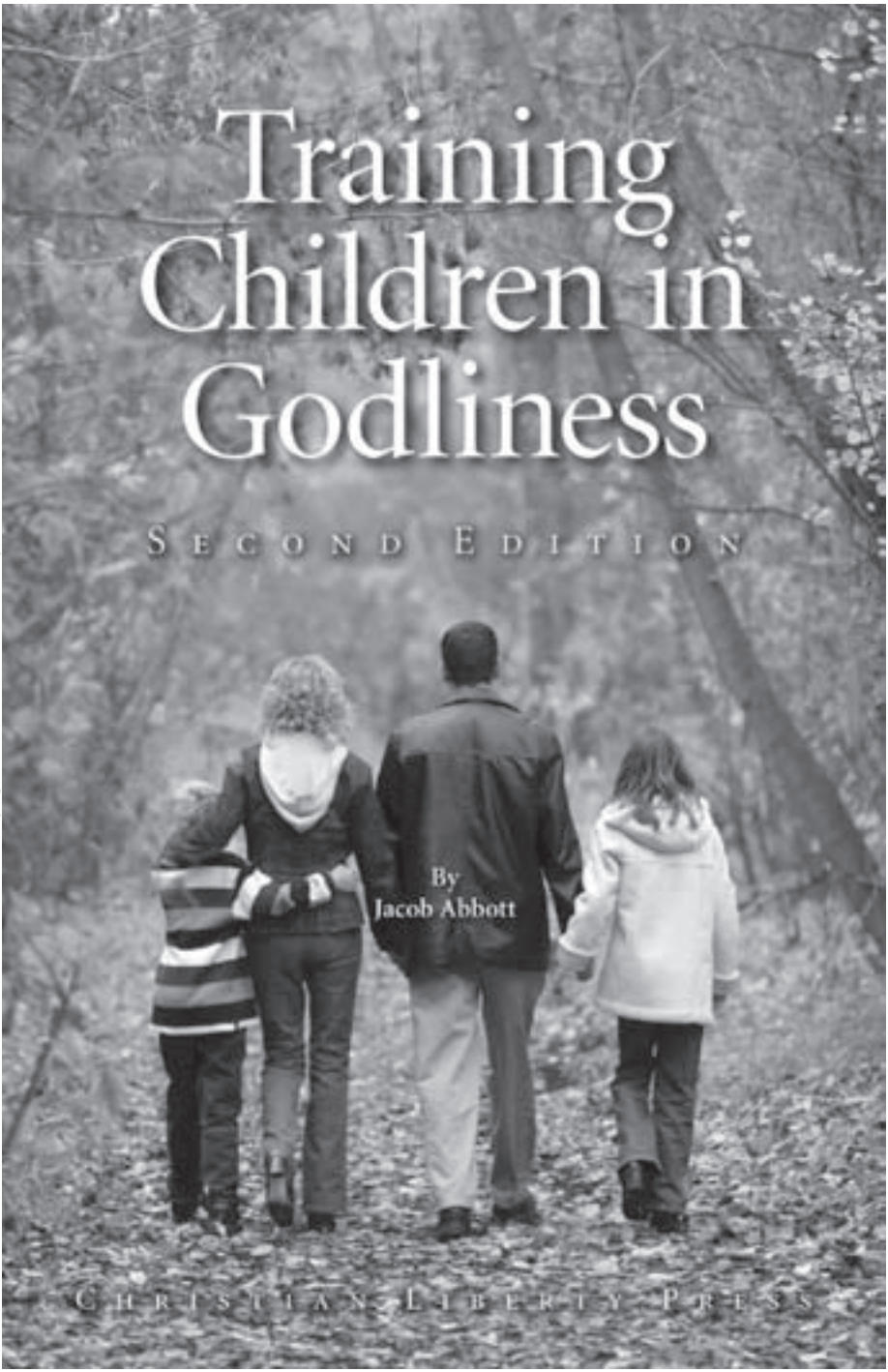

Originally published as *The Way to Do Good or the Christian Character Mature*; Copyright © 1836 by William Peirce, Boston

A publication of
Christian Liberty Press
502 West Euclid Avenue
Arlington Heights, IL 60004
www.christianlibertypress.com

Edited and revised by Michael J. McHugh
Layout and editing by Edward J. Shewan
Copyedited by Diane C. Olson
Cover image by Corey Hochachka, copyright © 2010 DesignPics
Title page image by Christine Mariner, copyright © 2010 DesignPics
Image on page 138 by Ron Ferris, copyright © 1989 Christian Liberty Press

This work is dedicated to the memory of Jacob Abbott, a nineteenth-century educator, minister, and author, whose writings formed the basis of this book.

Table of Contents

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

About the Author

Jacob Abbott was born in Holloway, Maine, on November 14, 1803, and died on October 31, 1874. During his lifetime, Abbott received universal acclaim as an evangelical minister, educator, and author. However, it was the gift of writing that provided Abbott with his greatest influence and fame.

As a writer of over 200 books, Abbott's great love was children's literature. He was considered by many to be the foremost writer of juvenile literature during his time. Historians describe Abbott as a kindly, devout man from Puritan ancestry who was gifted with a spirit of gentleness, simplicity, and industry. In his modest way he typified the Puritan heritage at its simple best.

The book *Training Children in Godliness* is mostly comprised of choice selections of writing by Jacob Abbott on the subject of child training. In an effort to make the writings of Abbott more practical and enjoyable to today's reader, this book was recomposed and updated, with changes being made by the editor for the sake of clarity and modern application. The editor has been careful to leave the original intent of the author's writings intact during the process of revision and editorial activity.

About the Editors

This book was revised and edited by Michael J. McHugh in 1992. He has worked in the field of Christian education for over thirty years with the Christian Liberty Academy of Arlington Heights, Illinois. During his time with the Academy, Mr. McHugh has worked as a teacher, administrator, curriculum director, and textbook author.

The second edition was revised and edited by Edward J. Shewan, who is currently managing editor of Christian Liberty Press. He has worked in developing Christian educational material for over twenty years.

Preface

This book is designed to give parents, and other concerned adults, a thorough understanding of how to minister to the hearts of children.

We live in a day and age where parents are constantly bombarded with the need to fulfill the emotional and materialistic needs of their children. Now meeting the physical needs of children is important; however, more parents should be challenged to evaluate their priorities in the area of child rearing. The most important aspect of raising children is to minister to their *spiritual* needs. As Jesus once said, "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26; cf. Mark 8:36).

Sadly, many parents have never fully understood that the God-ordained institution of the family is designed to provide them with a spiritual ministry to their children. It is, after all, through the vital work of child training as performed each day by parents that Almighty God has chosen to prepare the next generation for godly dominion. God has assigned parents a double duty to perform while they remain on earth. First, we must live our lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; and second, we must lead the next generation to a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus and prepare them to live for God. In other words, fathers and mothers are not only to walk righteously themselves, but they must train up and qualify their successors.

It is my prayer that this book will enlighten and challenge both Christian parents and concerned adults to take full advantage of the opportunities God provides to turn the hearts of children in the way of righteousness.

Michael J. McHugh
January 2010

Chapter 1

How to Influence Children in Godliness

This chapter is founded upon the simple fact that children normally pay more attention to what adults do, rather than to what they say. This fact should not lead us to believe, however, that what we say to children—or how we formally instruct them—is unimportant. Rather, this point simply emphasizes the futility of trying to lead little ones to God through formal instruction only, while our personal witness remains cold and morally inconsistent.

The key to gaining positive access to a child's heart is through godly *actions* and godly *teaching*. In other words, our actions and words must complement one another if we truly expect to make a wholesome impression on young people.

> It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.
>
> *Matthew 18:14*

Suppose that a hundred healthy infants, each a few weeks old, were taken from the city of Chicago and placed under the care of registered nurses on the floor of a large hospital. On another floor, let another hundred, taken from the most virtuous families in Scotland, be placed. Take another hundred from the high nobility of the families of England and another from the lowest and most degraded haunts of vice in the ghettos of any large city in the world.

Now, if such a representation of infants were made of some of the most dissimilar of the classes (e.g., upper, middle, and lower classes) into which the human race has been divided, and the children were brought together into the same hospital, the question is whether the most minute and thorough

scrutiny could distinguish between the classes and assign each to its origin. They are to be under one common system of arrangement and attendance. We also suppose all the subjects to be healthy in order to remove grounds of distinction, which an intelligent physician might observe in hereditary tendencies to disease. Under these circumstances, if the several groups of infants were subjected to the most thorough examination, would any ingenuity or science be able to establish a distinction between them? Probably not. There would be the same forms, the same instincts, the same cries. The infants on one floor would be lulled to sleep like the infants on all the other floors; and the same bright objects, or distinct sounds, that would awaken the senses and give the first gentle stimuli to the minds of the children in one group would be done to those on the other floors. Thus, inspection alone of these little ones would not enable us to label them. And if they were to remain months or even years under such care for concealed and embryonic differences to be developed, we would probably wait in vain.

But instead of waiting, let us suppose that the four groups of children are dismissed—each to his mother and his home—and that they all pass through the years of childhood and youth, exposed to the various influences that surround them in the dwellings and neighborhoods to which they respectively belong—among the alleys and tall buildings of the city of Chicago, or the glens and hillsides of Scotland, or in the nurseries and drawing rooms of Grosvenor Square in London, or the dark crowded alleys of the ghetto. Distribute them thus to the places to which they respectively belong, and leave them there until the lapse of time has brought them to maturity; then bring them all together for examination again.

How widely will they be found to have separated now? Though they commenced life under similar circumstances, their paths began at once to diverge. When we compare them

now, they seem totally dissimilar. Contrast the Chicagoan with the Scot, the conceited nobleman with the common indigent. Examine their characters thoroughly, their feelings, their opinions, their principles of conduct, their plans of life, their pursuits, their hopes, their fears. Almost everything is dissimilar. There is, indeed, a common humanity in all, but everything not essential to the very nature of man is changed; and characters are formed, so totally dissimilar, that we might almost doubt the identity of the class.

There is another thing to be observed, too. Every individual of each class, with scarcely a single exception, goes with his class and forms a character true to the influences that have operated upon him in his own home. You will look in vain for a character of cowardice among the criminals' sons, or for virtuous principle among children brought up in a community of thieves. You can find cases enough of this kind, it is true, in works of fiction, but few in real life. So the children of Beijing all become Chinese in their feelings and opinions and principles of action; the aristocratic children all become aristocratic; and all those who in London or Beijing find their homes in the crowded quarters of vice, if they are brought up thieves and beggars, as thieves and beggars they will live. As the Bible declares, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

And yet it is not education, in the common sense of that term, that produces these effects upon human character; that is, it is not formal efforts on the part of parents and friends to instruct and train up the young to walk in their own footsteps. In respect to the acquisition of knowledge and of accomplishments, great effort would be made to give formal instruction by some of the classes enumerated above. But in regard to almost all that relates to the formation of character, principles of action, the sentiments, and the feelings, the work is done by the thousand nameless influences that sur-

round every child and that constitute the moral atmosphere in which he spends his youthful years.

Although each class of youngster began life with a sinful nature, the moral atmosphere that each child was exposed to in his home ultimately established the specific sinful patterns or tendencies that each child would be prone to follow.

Now everyone does a great deal to produce this kind of moral atmosphere, which is so central in determining the character of children who grow up in the midst of it—so much so that our influence upon the young is an exceedingly important part of our witness for Jesus Christ. In fact, God has assigned us a double duty to perform while we remain here. First, we must use the world well, while we continue in it; and secondly, we must prepare a generation to receive the trust when we shall pass away from the scene. We are not only to occupy well ourselves, but to train up and qualify our successors.

Perhaps the reader may think that these remarks on the subject of the young must be intended principally for parents. Far from it, for there are many relations in life that give us a very free access to the young, and an influence over them as an inevitable result. One person is a parent, who consequently exercises a very controlling influence over the whole character and future prospects of his children. Another is a brother or sister, who enjoys opportunities of influence almost as great as those of a father or mother. Still another may live in a family where there are no children, yet he is familiar with the families of neighbors or friends. He is thus thrown into frequent conversations with cousins and nephews and nieces, who are all the time catching his spirit and imitating his principles. An uncle or an aunt, in such a case, is very apt to imagine that they have nothing to do but to keep in the good graces of their little relatives through an occasional card or gift. They forget the vast effects that ten years

of almost constant and yet unguarded fellowship must have, in giving a right moral turn to the sentiments and the feelings of a child's heart. If we look back to our own early days, we shall remember in how many instances our opinions, sentiments, feelings, and perhaps our whole character was based upon the influence of an uncle, an aunt, or a neighbor.

In my father's family, there was a very old diary. It was the admiration of our childish eyes, a collection of college compositions, journals, and letters of an amiable uncle who died so early that his nephews could never know him, except through these remains. Many a rainy day and many a winter evening this diary was explored as a mine of instruction and enjoyment. Moral principle was awakened and cultivated by the sentiments of an essay; ambition was aroused by the spirit of a discussion; feelings of kindness and good will were cherished by the amiable and gentle spirit that breathed in the letters of the journal. This all undoubtedly exerted a vast influence by giving form to the character and sentiments of the boys who had access to it. How vastly greater would have been the influence of a constant fellowship with the living man.

If the reader does not have the above means of influence, he may be, perhaps, a Sunday school teacher; or he may have boys in his employment and have frequent contact with many youngsters who stand by unnoticed and listen to his directions or conversation. Thus we have, in a thousand other ways, a connection with the young which, though we may consider it slight, still exerts a powerful influence in impressing our characters upon the impressionable hearts and minds that it reaches. Hence, all who wish to do good should understand something of the character and susceptibilities of children, and make it a part of their constant care to exert as happy and as righteous an influence upon them as they can.

I proceed to give some practical directions by which this must be done. They are not intended solely for parents, but for all who have any contact with the young. Those who have made this topic a particular subject of reflection will find nothing new in these suggestions. They are the principles which common sense and common observation establish. They are presented here, not as discoveries but as obvious truth, to be kept in mind by those who would accomplish the most extensive and the most unmixed good in this part of the widely extended "vineyard of God" (cf. Isaiah 5:7). We scarcely need remark that this chapter will relate solely to the employment of human means, which can only be successful in promoting that thorough change in the desires and affections of the heart which constitutes salvation, if they are in harmony with the will of God. One person plants, another waters, but it is God who gives the increase.

Prominent Characteristics of Childhood

The plan of discussion that we shall pursue will be as follows:

I. **To consider some of the prominent characteristics of childhood, in accordance with which an influence over the young can alone be secured**

II. **To deduce from them some general rules for ministering to the hearts of children**

To understand the course that must be taken in order to secure an influence over children, we must first understand the leading principles and characteristics of childhood, for it is these upon which we are to act. Let us summarize these principles: (1) *to exercise upon every object their dawning faculties*, both of body and mind; (2) *to learn all they can about the world into which they are introduced*, presenting as it does so strange and imposing a spectacle to their senses; (3) *to love those who sympathize with and aid them in their objectives*; and (4) *to catch the spirit and imitate the actions of those whom they thus love*. These are the great leading principles by which the moral and intellectual nature of childhood is governed. These we shall consider in detail.

To Exercise Their Opening Faculties

The infant's first pleasure of this kind is *the employment of the senses*, beginning with gazing at a light or listening with quiet pleasure to the sound of his mother's voice singing in his ear. While the little child just ushered into existence lies still in his crib, how often does his mother say, "I would like to know exactly what he is thinking of; what state of mind he is in." It is probably not very difficult to tell. Imagine yourself in his situation: look at a white wall and banish all thought and reflection, as far as you can, so as in imagination to arrest all operations of the mind, and retain nothing but vision. Let the light come into the eye and produce the sensation of whiteness, and nothing more. Let it awaken no

thought, no reflection, no inquiry. Imagine yourself never having seen any white before, so as to make the impression a novel one, and also imagine yourself never having seen anything or heard anything before, so as to cut off all grounds for wonder or surprise. In a word, conceive of a mind in the state of simple sensation, with none of those thousand feelings and thoughts which sensation awakens in the spirit that is mature, and you probably have the exact state of the infantile intellect, when the first avenues are opened, by which the external world is brought to act upon its newborn mind. Can it be surprising then, under such circumstances, that even mere sensation should be pleasure?

As the child advances through the first months of existence, his mental processes, which the sensations awaken, are more and more developed. We are not to consider these powers of the mind complete and independent at the beginning; however, they gradually develop over the years, and that too, in a great measure through the instrumentality of the senses. After some months have passed away, the impressions from without penetrate, as it were, farther within, and awaken new susceptibilities that gradually develop themselves. Now each new faculty is a new possession, and the simple exercise of it, without end or aim, is and must be a great positive pleasure. First comes the power to walk. We are always surprised at seeing how much delight the child, who first finds that he has strength and steadiness to go upright across the room, finds in going across again and again, from table to chair and from chair to sofa, as long as his strength remains. But why should we be surprised at it? Suppose the inhabitants of any town should find themselves suddenly possessed with the power of flying. We should find them for hours and days filling the air, flying from tree to tree and from housetop to steeple, with no end or aim but the pleasure enjoyed in the simple exercise of a new power. The crowds that press in for a glimpse of a famous person, or the number of delighted

citizens brought out by an unexpected fall of snow in a warm climate, show that man has not outgrown the principle.

Now this love of the exercise of the new power is obvious enough in the cases to which I have referred: seeing, hearing, walking, and in many other cases, such as using the limbs to produce sound by striking hard bodies, breaking, upsetting, piling up blocks, or dragging about chairs. It is precisely the same feeling that would lead a man to go about uprooting trees or breaking enormous rocks, if he should suddenly find himself endued with the power of doing so. It is obvious enough in these common physical operations; but we forget how many thousand mental processes there are, and others partly mental and partly physical, which possess the same charm and which, in fact, make up a large portion of the activities and enjoyments of childhood.

One of the earliest examples of a mental process that the child is always pleased to exercise is *perceiving language*. This may be described more accurately as the susceptibility of having pleasant images awakened in the mind by means of the power of certain sounds striking upon the ear. There are thousands who have observed the indications of this pleasure, who do not understand the nature and the source of it. Every mother, for example, observes that children love to be talked to, long before they can talk themselves. They imagine that what pleases the listener is his interest in the particular thing said, whereas it is probably only his interest in finding himself possessed of the new and strange power of processing sounds. The mother says, "Where's Father? Where's Father?" and imagines that the child is pleased with the inquiry, whereas the infant is only pleased with that sound. It is this power of a word to produce a new and peculiar mental state that is probably the source of pleasure. Hence, the interest that the little auditor will take will not be in proportion to the point of the story, but to the frequency of the words contained in it that call up familiar and vivid

ideas. It is not, therefore, what is understood but the mere power of understanding—the first development of a new mental faculty—which pleases the possessor.

Telling short stories is one of the simplest cases of the pleasure arising from the first exercise of a mental power. There are a thousand others that come forth—one after another, all through the years of childhood—and keep the young mind supplied with new sources of enjoyment. The amusements of a child almost all derive their charm from his calling into exercise these dawning powers and enabling him to realize his possession. Digging in the ground, making little gardens, playing store, playing soldier, and a thousand other things, call into play the memory, the imagination, the use of the limbs and senses, and thus exercise all the powers that have not yet lost their novelty. In fact, these powers are so rapidly progressive that they are always new.

This *love of action* is among the strongest of the propensities of childhood. It is certainly stronger than the appetites. In one case, I addressed a five year old boy—one at least as great a lover of candy and sweets as other boys his age—who had come into my study. "Suppose I should tell you that you may either have four large sugar cookies, or you may go and get some sticks and paper to help me make a fire in the fireplace. Which would you rather do?"

"Why, I think I would rather help you make the fire," said the boy.

"Well, suppose I should tell you I was going to cut some newspaper into small pieces and wrap up a little of my kindling in each piece? You would have your choice either to sit at the table and help me or have a large piece of apple pie and a chocolate rabbit."

The countenance of the child showed for an instant that it was a very serious question, but as he glanced an eye at

the single pair of scisssors that lay upon the table he said, "I would rather help cut up the paper."

I have no doubt that a vast majority of children, from three to five years of age, would answer similar questions in a similar manner. What time and money are spent in sweets and expensive toys, to win access to children's hearts, or to make them happy, while all the time the path to childish affection and enjoyment lies in so totally different a direction!

Anyone who will make childhood a study by observing its peculiarities, and making experiments upon its sensitivities and tendencies, will find innumerable examples of the gratification they thus derive from the mere exercise of their dormant abilities. For example, there is enumeration, the power of conceiving numbers and their relations to one another. You may try this experiment. Take a young child, from three to four years of age, just old enough to begin to count, and sit with him at a table with ten buttons or kernels of corn before you. Let him look at the objects until his interest in them simply as objects is satisfied, and then begin to count them in various ways, so as gently to exercise his emerging powers of calculation. First count them all. Then count two of them, and two more, and then the remaining six. Go on, perhaps, in the following manner:

> There is one, and there is another; that makes two. Now there is another. How many do two and another, counted together, make? Let us see: one, two, three. They make three. Two things, and then another thing put with them, makes three things.
>
> Now we will put them in a row, and begin at this end and count them. They make ten. Now we will begin at the other end, and see if they make the same. Yes, they make ten. It is the same. If we count them from this end to that end, they make ten; and if we count

> them from that end to this, they also make ten. Now we will begin in the middle.

I state this to show how extremely short and simple the steps are that must be taken to enable the child to follow along. Such steps may be indefinitely varied with a little ingenuity, while the mind of the child is all the time occupied with simply adding numbers (i.e., exercising an ability which he then, almost for the first time, finds that he possesses). In fact, it can hardly be said that he possessed it before. The exercise not merely calls it into play, it almost calls it into being. Go on with the exercise for the purpose of seeing how long he will continue to be interested. Unless some other object of excitement has possession of his mind, your patience will be exhausted long before he will be ready to stop.

Such examples are innumerable. In fact, let an intelligent observer, when he sees children busily engaged in some scheme of amusement or activity, pause a moment and look over them and ask, "What now is the secret source of pleasure here? What constitutes the charm? What power of body or mind is it, whose exercise here gives the enjoyment?" Such inquiries, and the analysis to which they lead, will give one a deep insight into the character and feelings of childhood and the great springs of its action. He who would gain an ascendancy over children must thus study them and aid them in this their leading desire. Make work for them, lay before them objects and activities that will make them acquainted with their abilities by calling them out into action, and lead them to a mode of action that will not interfere with the comforts or rights of others. No one can really understand children in this respect, sympathize with them, and aid them, without finding their hearts soon bound to him by the strongest ties of gratitude and affection. But we must pass on to the other leading characteristics of childhood previously listed.

To Learn All They Can About the World into Which They Find Themselves Introduced

Next to their desire to act, their strongest impulse is *a desire to know*. This, like the other, has been universally observed; but, like the other, its true nature is not very exactly understood. It is not so much a desire to know what is remarkable or curious, as *to know what is*. It is the interest of knowing rather than an interest in the novelty or extraordinariness of what is known. All things are new to them; consequently, if you tell or explain something to them, it is of little consequence what it is.

Many parents have said, "My child is continually asking for stories, more stories, until my powers of imagination and invention are exhausted. What shall I do?" It shows that the parent who makes it does not distinctly understand the nature of the intellectual desire that he is called upon to supply. "Stories" mean *talk*, or at least any talk about what is new will satisfy the appetite for stories. Set off, then, on any tract and talk. Suppose you yourself could meet a man who had been on the moon, and he should sit down and describe accurately and vividly what he saw there one day—how he took a walk, what objects he saw, and what incidents with which he met. Or suppose he should describe the interior of a room, any room whatever—the furniture, the instruments, their uses and construction. Why, there would not be an hour of his residence on the planet that would not afford abundant materials for a conversation to which we would listen with the deepest interest and pleasure. Well, now we must remember that this world is all "moon" to children, and we can scarcely go amiss in describing it. There is no hour in your day, and no object that you see, which is not full of subjects of interest to them.

Thus every object is the subject for an extended talk or story. A pin, a button, a key, a stick of wood—there is nothing that is not full of interest to children, if you will only be minute

enough. Take a stick of wood. Tell how the tree it came from sprung up out of the ground years ago; how it grew every summer by the sap; how this stick was first a little bud, next year a shoot, and by and by a strong branch; how a bird perhaps built her nest on it; how squirrels ran up and down, and ants crept over it; how the woodman cut down the tree. Expand all the particulars into the most minute narrative. It is amazing that many parents complain that they are at a loss for subjects of conversation with their children.

If you describe nothing in your story that the child did not know before, he will still enjoy the description. Our readers will not dispute this, if they call to mind the fact that the most interesting passages they themselves read in books are graphic accounts of scenes or events that they have witnessed themselves. The charm of all good description consists in its presenting to the reader—in spirited, graphic language—that with which he is most perfectly familiar. Hence it happens that if we take up a traveller's account of our country, we turn first to read the description that he has given of our own town; partly, perhaps, from curiosity to know his opinion of us, but still, in a great degree, for the simple pleasure of seeing through the medium of language that with which we are perfectly familiar by sight.

Our object then, in talking to children, is not to find something new, strange, and wonderful. We have only to clothe in language such conceptions and truths as they can understand, without racking our minds to produce continual novelty. Conversation conducted thus, though at first view might seem mere amusement, will in fact be very useful. The child will rapidly acquire familiarity with language by it, which is one of the most important acquisitions he can make. Then you will say a great deal that will be new to your child, though it may seem commonplace to you. Although you may not always aim at moral instruction, the narratives

and descriptions you give will convey a moral expression that will have great influence upon him.

Fiction or Falsehood

Parents occasionally express concern that there may be danger in narrating anything to children that is not historically true, lest it should lead them first to undervalue strict truth and finally to form the habit of falsehood. These fears are not without some grounds, for it does require careful watch and constant effort to form and preserve a habit of honesty in children. Whether you relate fictitious stories to them or not, you will often find in them propensities to deceit and falsehood, which it will sometimes require all your moral power to withstand. We cannot, therefore, avoid the danger of children falling into the sin of falsehood. The only question is, how we can most advantageously meet and overcome it.

Now it seems to me that we cannot accomplish this by confounding fictitious narration with falsehood, and condemning both. No one pretends that the narration of fictitious incidents is in itself criminal. The objection is that such fiction may have a tendency to lead to what is unlawful, the intention to deceive being essential to the guilt of falsehood. The question is then where, in attempting to guard children from falsehood, we can most advantageously take our stand. Shall we assume the position that all narration that is not historically true is wrong? Or shall we show them that the intention to deceive is the essence of the guilt of falsehood, and contend only against that?

My own opinion is that it is easier and better, in every respect, to do the latter. If you bring children at once to the line that divides honesty and deception, they can see easily and readily that you have brought them to the boundaries of guilt. In maintaining this distinction, you will have reason and conscience clearly assenting; consequently, you can raise the strongest fortification against sin. On the other hand, if you

extend your lines of defense so as to include what you admit is not wrong, but only supposed to be dangerous, you extend greatly your circle of defense. Moreover, you increase the difficulty of drawing a clear line of demarcation, and—notwithstanding all you can do or say—your theory condemns the mode of instruction adopted by the Savior Jesus Christ.

Therefore, we may indulge the imagination freely in children; but we must raise an impassable wall, on the first confines of intention to deceive, and guard it with the greatest vigilance.

For example, if a little child should ask for a story, perhaps you might say, "Shall I tell you something real or something imaginary?"

"What is imaginary?"

"Suppose I make up a story about a squirrel who lived in the woods by the name of Chipperee, and tell you what he did all day; how he came out of his hole in the morning, what he saw, what he found to eat, and what other squirrels he met, and about his going down to a little brook to drink and carrying home nuts for the winter. If there never was any such squirrel and I made up the whole story, that would be imaginary."

"But father, that would not be true. Is it not wrong to say anything that is not true?"

"No, it is not always wrong to say what is not strictly true. If I were to say anything that was not true in order to deceive you, that would be wrong. For example, if I had some bitter medicine to give you and I covered it with sugar and told you it was all sweet sugar, that would be wrong. But if I imagine a story about a squirrel just to amuse you and teach you in a more pleasant way how squirrels live, and then if I tell you plainly that it is not a true account of any particular squir-

rel, would you think that there would be anything wrong in that?"

Thus it seems that in this case, as in most others, it would be easiest and safest, as well as most biblical, to draw the line at the real point where guilt begins. Here only is there a tangible, moral distinction that children can appreciate; and though the work of keeping them off of the forbidden grounds of deception and falsehood will require much effort and care, it seems as if this is the most proper place to stand. However, if after mature reflection, any parents think differently and still consider all fiction dangerous, they ought to be controlled by their own convictions and abstain from it altogether.

We have mentioned three great classes of subjects that may supply parents with means of conversation with their children, so as to gratify their almost insatiable appetite for knowledge. We have gone fully into this part of the subject, an account of the universality of the complaint on the part of those who have the care of young children, that they do not know what to tell them.

Having thus attempted to show those interested in children what to tell them, we may perhaps devote a few paragraphs to considering the best way to tell it.

Addressing the Mind through the Senses

Address the mind of the child through the senses, through those faculties of the mind by which the impressions of the senses are recognized or recalled. In other words, present everything in such a way that it may convey vivid pictures to the mind. In childhood, the senses are emphatically the great avenues to knowledge. I can best illustrate what I mean by contrasting two ways of telling the same story:

> A man had a fine dog, and he was very fond of it. He used to take good care of it and give the dog all it

> wanted. In fact, he did all he could to make his dog comfortable so that it would enjoy a happy life. Thus, he loved his dog very much and took great pleasure in seeing it comfortable and happy.

This now presents very few sensible images to the mind of the child. In the following form, it would convey the same general ideas, but far more distinctly and vividly.

> There was once a man who had a large black and white dog, beautifully spotted. He made a little house for him out in a sunny corner of the yard and used to give him as much food as he wanted. He would go and see him sometimes, and pat his head while he was lying upon his straw in his little house. He loved his dog.

No one at all acquainted with children need be told how much stronger an interest the latter style of narration would excite.

The difference is that the former is expressed in abstract terms, which the mind comes to appreciate fully only after long habits of generalization, while in the latter, the meaning comes through sensible images that the child can picture to himself with ease and pleasure. This is the key to one of the great secrets of generating interest in children, and in teaching the young generally. *Approach their minds through the senses.* Describe everything as it presents itself to the eye and to the ear in great detail.

The intelligent reader will be able to apply this rule to all the categories of subjects in education. We might well follow out the principle, its illustration and application to the various stages of childhood and youth, and the proper limits of it—for its limits must be observed or else we shall make the pupil helplessly dependent upon his senses for life. There is, however, little danger of passing these limits in early years. The great difficulty with instructions and addresses to chil-

dren, and the books written for them, is not lack of simplicity as is commonly supposed, but too much generality and abstractness.

Style, Tone, and Inflection

This leads me to my final recommendation. Let your style be abrupt and striking, and give the reins entirely to the imagination. Aim at the utmost freedom of form and manner, and let your tones and inflections be highly varied. The tones expressive of emotion are instinctive, not acquired. This is proved by their universal similarity among all nations. The style, too, should be abrupt and pointed, and everything illustrated with action. At least, this is one element of interest that should be used in a greater or lesser degree at discretion.

We will consider one final example to illustrate this point. It is our story of the man who was kind to his dog. We have given two ways of beginning it—the second adding very much to the interest which the child would take in it. But by our present rule of giving abruptness and point, and striking transition to the style, we can give it a still greater power. Suppose the narrator, with a child on each knee, begins by saying:

> One pleasant morning a man was standing upon the steps of his door, and he said, "I think I will go and see my dog Towser." Now, where do you think his dog Towser lived?
>
> "I don't know," will be the reply of each listener, with a face full of curiosity and interest.
>
> Why old Towser was out in a little square house that his master had made for him in a corner of the yard. So he took some meat in his hand for Towser's breakfast. Do you think he took out a plate, a knife, and a fork? This man was very kind to Towser—his beautiful, spotted, black and white Towser—and when he got to his house

> he opened the door and said, "Towser, come out here, Towser." So Towser came running out and stood there wagging his tail. His master patted him on the head.
>
> You, my son, may jump down on your hands and feet, and I will tell you exactly how it was. You shall be Towser. Here, you may get under the table, which will do for Towser's house. Then I will come and call you out and pat you on the head.

We go into these minute details with no little hesitation, since some of our readers may perhaps consider them beneath the dignity of a book for adults. To know how to make a single child happy for half an hour is indeed a little thing, but the knowledge acquires importance and dignity when we consider how many millions of children there are to be affected by it; how many half hours in the life of each may be rescued from vain idleness and boredom by these means. Thus the objects, though comparatively trifling when regarded in detail, rise to dignity and importance when we consider their vast application.

This particular style, with varied modes of illustration mingled with action, will give spirit and interest even to many moral instructions. But we must not dwell on this point; we must pass on to the third great characteristic of childhood. The reader will, we hope, keep in mind the plan of our discussion. We are considering some of the great characteristics of childhood, preparatory to some practical directions for gaining through them an access to the heart. Having examined *love of action* and *love of acquiring knowledge*, we now pass to the third.

To Love Those from Whom They Receive Aid and Sympathy in Their Desires

Gratitude in the young partakes of the general childlike qualities of their character, and it is not very surprising that

it should be most strongly awakened by such kindness as they can most sensibly appreciate.

There are two conditions of affection on the part of children. ***First***, *the kindness intended should be on their level*; it should show itself in favors that they can understand and appreciate. This tendency in the heart of a child is in perfect keeping with the general laws of human nature, with respect to gratitude and love. These feelings are awakened, not by the deeds of kindness that we experience from others, but by the feelings of kindness of which we consider the deeds an indication. It is a sympathetic action of heart upon heart while actions, words, and looks are the medium. Consequently, the effect is not in proportion to the greatness of the favors, but to the distinctness with which they move the mind of the receiver to the love that originated them. Hence it is that, unless the kindness you render to children is such as they can fully appreciate, it will not produce its proper effects. Many persons are often surprised to see how easily some of their acquaintances will gain the affection of children and acquire an influence over them. But this is the secret of it. They come down to the child's level in the nature of the favors they show to them. They excite or employ their mental powers, they speak a kind word indicating interest in their play or pursuits, they aid them in their own little schemes, or they at least regard them with looks and words of kindness. These are indications of a feeling of kindness that the child can understand, and as we have seen before, it is in proportion to the distinctness with which the feeling of kindness is perceived in one's heart that gratitude and affection are awakened in another.

The ***second*** condition on which the affection and gratitude of children is to be secured is that *the favors that call for it should be sincere*, or at least that the child should have sufficient evidence of sincerity. A splendid toy, however adapted to interest the child, if sent to him by a relative or an acquaintance of

his parents who really cares little about him, will be received with selfish gratification perhaps, but with little gratitude towards the donor. In fact, this condition stands on the same foundation with the other. The child must see, through the favor bestowed, a feeling of real kindness in the one who bestowed it; for it is this emotion in one's heart which, by a kind of sympathy, awakens the corresponding emotion in another. The present or the favor aids only as the medium by which the intercommunication is made. Thus one person may give the most valuable and costly presents to children, while another will produce a stronger impression upon their hearts, awaken a more friendly feeling, and connect himself with them by more pleasant and permanent associations by the mere manner in which he talks with them.

To Catch the Spirit and Imitate the Actions of Those Whom They Love

Probably this imitative, or rather sympathetic, principle has more influence in the formation of early character than any other. *Associations and sympathy have far more influence with children than does argument or reasoning.* How often do parents attempt to reason with children in respect to some duty or command to hasten the performance, when the result is directly the reverse? The discussion unsettles the subject and throws a doubt about the duty, for argument presupposes a question with respect to the subject of it. Therefore, it almost always makes it harder for the child to obey than it was before. Reasoning upon the general principles of duty when the mind of the pupil is in a calm state is highly important as a means of instruction, as will hereafter be shown more fully. However, reasoning has comparatively little effect upon the formation of the habits and character. The cause of this is that the powers of associated logic are among the last that are developed, certainly among the last to come in for a share in the oversight of a child's conduct and character. If the reader has the disposition and the skill to experiment