



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,  
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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## THE "P.R." LETTER BAG.

[The Editor is not responsible for the opinions of correspondents.]

DEAR EDITOR,—Your correspondent "Anxious to Improve," would find great help in a book by Miss Shirreff, *The Kindergarten at Home*. There she would learn the principles which lie at the bottom of the Kindergarten system. If she will then get the gifts, and *Kindergarten Practice*, by Mary Gurney (Myers & Co.), or some other handbook, she would be able to give her child some of the advantages of Froebel's system. Such occupations as mat-plaiting, filling in geometrical patterns with coloured pencils, and pricking out patterns, will interest and please the child as he gets older. Through these, he can be taught colour, form and number. "Black Beauty" is an excellent story of a horse. It is much too advanced for a child of three, but a good deal could be repeated to him in simpler language.

A. H. A.

DEAR EDITOR,—You do not know what a help "The Philosopher at Home" has been, I was really in despair to know how to make the child *want* to control his little (for they were not very bad) outbreaks of temper, when, after reading the article, I was watching him play with his father, and heard him say, "I am a giant, father, a good giant, and have been fighting a bad giant." I asked him if he would really like to grow into a giant, and fight a very naughty giant. He was delighted with the idea, especially, when I told him that every time *he* conquered, the evil giant grew smaller, and the good giant stronger. I have only to tell him to take care, or the giant will conquer now, and it is wonderful how the little fellow controls himself. He is naturally very irritable, which trait, I fear, he inherits from me, and his efforts have been a real help to me with my giant. He loves to tease though, which makes him try often to be slow just to annoy Mdlle. —, and often makes him disobedient in many little things. I do not know quite how to deal with that. For instance, he will be sent on an errand, and will do several things usually quite harmless in themselves, even praiseworthy, like putting away things he finds about on his way to the door, before fetching the thing he is sent for. It is very evident he does it merely to be a bit slow, and he is only slower on being told to hasten. Yet really he can be very quick and skilful over what he wants to do very much.

Could you not give us some suggestions in the *Review* on training in *prompt* obedience? It would be such a help. I know the fault has been in not beginning sooner (— is four), but I did not realise how soon

babies learn. My other child of sixteen months is such a good little fellow. I have much to learn myself.

A. W.

DEAR EDITOR,—The articles I notice in December's magazines are "Squandered Girlhood," by the Hon. Mrs. Lyttelton Gell, in the *Nineteenth Century*, and one on "Religious Education in Board and Voluntary Schools," by Archdeacon Wilson, of Rochdale, in the *Contemporary*. Both these seem to me worthy of perusal.

H. P.

DEAR EDITOR,—I read with great interest, and admiration your papers on "The Formation of Habits." The advice you give to parents on this subject is most useful and most necessary, and I should like very much to see another question equally well discussed, the treatment—viz., of traits of character with which a child is born into the world. My experience is perhaps exceptional, for I have had children, and seen them grow up to man or womanhood, who (every one of them) have shown from infancy characteristics of such force and tenacity that affection and intelligence combined have failed to produce *much* modifying effect upon them. There are children *born* greedy and selfish, and others loving and self-sacrificing. Here you find an inherited vein of jealousy, there an unreasoning perversity; one child is courageous and truthful, another cowardly and a sneak. In every family I know, some member of it has brought into the world good or evil tendencies, which alas! alas! are of greater importance for weal or woe than the good habits which, as you rightly say, a mother can, and ought to form. But my children have never been "wax" to begin with, the differences between No. 1 and No. 2 showed at the end of a few weeks. A mother has no more power to *entirely* and *permanently* change a child's nature than to alter the colour of his hair. Ought we not to be glad that this is so? Are we ourselves fit to undertake such a responsibility as this? Do we blame a mother whose son turns out a drunkard? Do we say she should have taught him *habits* of self-control? No, we know that an inherited taste for drink will baffle every effort, and so will many a taste for other forms of vice. Heroism, devotion, self-restraint, these also in most cases are *Nature's* gifts, we can modify, we cannot uproot! This may sound hopeless and sad to you. It is not so. The least promising children are those that can be *easily* moulded. Force is the essence of all vigorous life, and the unmanageable irrepressible boy is the strong man of the future.

There is another point I should like to mention. My children's characters have developed in phases or stages. There was an age at which temper developed with great force and yielded *slowly* to counteracting influences; there was a quarrelsome stage; and later on, very late in the teens, a remarkable change, when in one case the affections grew where little enough had been seen before, grew and expanded like flowers. Character it seems to

me is something distinct from habits, and though these may in time form character it is a matter of generations rather than of weeks. Experience and influences will modify character to the very end of life.

My grown-up son said to me the other day, it is not the habits of punctuality which my father *tried* to form in me that have made me punctual, it is the *unpunctuality* of this household that has converted me. With many apologies for this long letter.—Yours very truly,

X. Y.

DEAR EDITOR,—You are so very good in taking notice of my odds and ends that I venture again with a suggestion. A sermon I heard the other day on "the Principle of Almsgiving," with a special reference to *children*, made me wish that you could get some one to write a little note or article on it in the *Parents' Review*. It is so usual a practice for parents when starting for church to deal round pennies for the offertory. "Here's something to put in the bag." What idea can this convey to the child of *a gift from itself to God*? The preacher was urging on his people a practice that I always have (and, of course, countless other mothers among the multitude), of giving a regular allowance, in my case only one shilling a month (plus halfpennies earned for quick dressing in the mornings). From the shilling one quarter is dedicated as not the child's, but to be given to God. So far from its being grudged, I find often that more is added. Also I do not think it a good plan to lend money in church if the purse is forgotten—even if the little face flushes with disappointment over its forgetfulness to change the purse into the Sunday frock pocket; for the debt discharged to mother, afterwards at home, *cannot seem the same thing*. We suggest the home missionary box on such occasions, on the return! We always talk of a "tenth" at least, and that for big folks' purses, which have to open for the bread and butter, and all kinds of things; also we keep before us the inspiring words in the Acts, which, although not mentioned in the Gospels seem to have been so frequently used that they passed into a proverb, of the Lord Jesus, "*Now He said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.*"

E. V.

DEAR EDITOR,—As one of your readers who is much interested in the *House of Education*, I venture to ask what salary would be expected by a "Tante." I have heard it stated that it would certainly be beyond the possibilities of many slender incomes; and yet it is to mothers who cannot afford to pay high wages, and secure superior help, that "Tante" would be so invaluable.

In reply to "An Appreciative Reader" of the *Parents' Review*, I should like to mention *Chamber Dramas for Children*, by Mrs. George Macdonald.

Yours truly,

A. G. S.

# THE PARENTS' REVIEW

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE  
OF HOME-TRAINING AND CULTURE.

"Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life."

## RUSKIN IN RELATION TO DANTE.

BY JULIA FIRTH.

READERS of Ruskin will remember his special comments on Dante in "Modern Painters," in "Munera Pulveris," and in "Fors Clavigera" (Letters xxiii. and xxiv.), and recall the references which he constantly makes to him and other great ones gone, as to invisible friends and brothers, with whom he is at one. "Only the imaginative truth is precious," he writes: "whenever we want to know what are the chief facts of any case, it is better not to go to political economists, not to mathematicians, but to the great poets; for I find they always see more of the matter than any one else." He describes, in reference to Dante and others, "The imagination brooding and wandering, but dream-gifted, so as to summon at any moment exactly such groups of ideas as shall justly fit each other," and gives instances of the mode in which the imaginative faculty, "the highest intellectual power of man," seizes its material. "All that it affirms, judges, describes, it affirms from within."

In his "Inaugural Lectures on Art," he says: "it was not until after an interval of nearly two thousand years of various error and pain, that partly as the true reward of Christian warfare nobly sustained through centuries of trial, and partly as the visionary culmination of the faith which saw in a maiden's