



THE CARE OF CHILDREN

SEBASTIAN KNEIPP

The Care Of Children
In Sickness and in Health

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Preface.

So many and varied are the conditions, positions, and classes of the human Race that it is impossible to number them; and yet there is not one of these but has its special duties and responsibilities, and it is in the proper fulfilment of these that man finds his happiness both in the present life and in that which is to come. If it were not so, people would certainly run away from their obligations, so hard and impossible do many of them appear.

As it is the hope of success and promise of happiness give man the power and will to work heartily and with much self-sacrifice in that state of life in which it has pleased God to place him.

Perhaps of all the conditions and positions of life there is not one which exceeds in importance that of the Mother of a family; if this be faithfully and capably occupied there is no limit to the happiness it creates. And of all the responsibilities and duties this involves there are none of more consequence than those of the Mother to her children.

I have often desired to set before Mothers their duties towards their children in a little book, and have frequently been about to commence it. and yet up to this time I have hesitated, doubting my power to deal with these duties in an able and efficient manner.

At last I have made the attempt to collect together the most prominent of these into a little book and I earnestly wish that I could give this personally into the hands of every Mother, and at the same time beg each and all to lay these duties to heart, I would say "Perform your duties towards your children right faithfully, so that your earthly

life, even though it be filled with trouble and care and impose on you a heavy yoke, may yet be full of promise for a happy eternity."

Nor would I less earnestly place before Mothers the duties they owe to themselves, for then only can they fulfil their duty to their children with happy and successful results, then only can they be sure of help from above. Again I say "Observe these duties imposed upon you by the Eternal Father to whose honor and glory they must be performed! And as it is part of our Faith that man needs help from above for all good things, so behave towards God as well brought up children behave to you when they want something viz. come and ask. Thus seek help from God by prayer and strive to be worthy; aid to the worthy it will certainly be given."

And if I make it my concern that Mothers should be able to perform their duties well I also offer to help them as much as in me lies so long; as I live.

Therefore listen, all you Mothers who read this little book and who wish to bring up your children according to its precepts. If you will lay before the Eternal God an important affair then say one little prayer for me, and I on my part will never forget to entreat the Father of Mercies for you in the daily service of our Holy Church.

Do you, Mothers, consent to this contract? Then is my word pledged to you and I will fulfil my part of it.

So now. little book, go forth into the world like the "Water-Cure", seek out the Mothers, tell them what to do and what to omit.

It will go both well and ill with thee for nothing good escapes persecution.

If you are well received be content, for you have accomplished something; if you are repulsed bear it with equanimity.

I meant well when I wrote this for the Mothers and I will, during my life, remember the Mothers in my prayers and

should this be still read when I have gone home even there I will not forget the Mothers.

I should like this little book to be regarded as a Christmas present because its first appearance was made at this season and my wish for the years that follow will be that all Mothers should order their lives and the bringing up of their children according to the rules laid down here and so obey God.

First Part. Brief Advice to Parents.

A. How Parents should take care of their own bodies.

If the father of a family desires to cultivate good and abundant fruit he looks round for a piece of land on which to grow it, and having purchased the ground spares no pains to keep it in the best possible condition. Not only so, but he will take care to remove everything that is likely to hurt it.

If the Creator has ordained that the inhabitants of the Earth should issue from wedlock, and that they should be brought up in the family circle and made capable of performing the duties of life which in due course will devolve upon them, then certainly a great deal depends upon the marriages, families and their supporters.

The general opinion acquired by experience is that no one should undertake matrimony who is not perfectly healthy and sound and likely to produce a healthy posterity. To this belongs not only a good figure and proper physical development but a healthy mind as well.

They who will marry and be useful to mankind must be sound in mind and body.

It is not only the various illnesses of the body but the manifold diseases of the mind which may strike at and ruin posterity.

Mental infirmities are inherited exactly like physical ones, as for example avarice, envy, anger, want of chastity and

want of moderation. If these are not corrected and controlled in the Parents they are unfortunately handed down to the children and what is worse the consequences and punishments are handed on also, even as the Holy Scriptures say "unto the third and fourth generation".

It does sometimes happen that the defects pass over a generation, but the more certainly will they appear in the second and the third. How good it would be if every man, beginning a career, would ask himself "Am I fit for marriage? Will not the predominating passions in my nature embitter my professional and my married life? and shall I not in the end be the cause of a second and third generation being punished for my defects?"

I know a family in which the noble, moral, and religious character has been preserved for two I hundred years.

Of course one can, on the other hand, point to many families wherein debauchery or other predominant vice has brought misery and ruin to the descendants.

He, or she, who has a loathsome disease would certainly not be chosen in marriage because one has an aversion to the malady and dreads its consequences.

Should one then be indifferent to or have a less aversion to the pestilential diseases of the soul?

How beautifully the proverb expresses it. "The Apple does not fall far from the tree." "As the field so the produce." "Like Father like Son."

Therefore they who wish to found a family should first endeavor to make themselves sound in body, soul, and spirit.

We have in water a glorious remedy for making diseased bodies healthy; it can however, since mind and body are so intimately connected, operate on the former through the latter. It has in fact helped many who were well disposed towards it to make their healthy bodies a home for healthy minds.

Only they who are themselves sound in mind and body, head and heart can reckon on a healthy posterity; for, as from a sickly tree no good fruit can be expected so likewise from sickly, unhealthy or useless parents, no sound, healthy children can be hoped for.

A Mother who wants mentally and bodily healthy children must resemble in a double sense a fruitful field.

We will next speak of the bodily health.

Section 1. The Mother's Food.

The Mother should partake only of a good healthy diet.

By this, however, I do not mean that which in everyday life is called and considered good but a diet that contains a good deal of nourishment which is suitable for the system and specially conducive to the formation of blood.

Those who are rich in blood and have its circulation in good order are, what is called, well nourished.

That which people generally consider good is as a rule merely prejudicial or to say the best of it, it is of no use to the system.

It is especially noticeable that the strongest and healthiest mothers and children are among the poorer classes in the country, whose food consists chiefly of the very simplest bread prepared from unadulterated flour.

That which is called Refined Flour may be the finest but it certainly is not the best, for its nutritive qualities are just those that have been taken from it. A sorry art indeed to extract from the flour exactly that which is really valuable and nourishing! This is now-a-days given to animals who certainly prosper better on the refining than men do.

One of the healthy poor women whom I have in my mind eats her bread-soup in the morning which supplies good nourishment to the blood and power to the whole body.

The midday meal is again prepared from the purest natural flour which partially retains the bran and as regards nourishment corresponds to the morning soup.

It is the same with the evening meal. In addition to this simple farinaceous diet potatoes are eaten, cooked in

different ways, and although these last have been much abused in writings and undervalued and marked as containing but little nourishment, yet the Poor who live on them are not more behind in bodily strength than those who have something "better".

The fundamental principle is to have a very simple but nourishing diet.

Avoid refined bread and farinaceous food prepared of refined flour. I am not opposed to a meat diet, yet I advise those who take it never to be without farinaceous food of simple, unadulterated, flour.

Undoubtedly meat contains much nourishment, yet too much meat forms a heated and impure blood.

Vegetables should be steamed and not cooked in water, because in this way they form a diet of scanty value. Too zealous vegetarians have a peculiar appearance, their complexion is dull and they lack energy and strength.

As much as possible spices should be avoided, they are like hot fire which cannot be used by the system.

I would especially counsel Mothers to avoid taking acid foods, especially those cooked with vinegar; for this last is an enemy to the blood, it both impoverishes and spoils it.

On the other hand, I recommend pickle-cabbage because this acid is quite different to vinegar acid. As a rule very little acid should be taken; the system does not require it. if it is not spoilt by custom..

Strong salt is harmful and operates corrodingly on the internal organs. Ham, smoked meat and similar animal food I generally leave for other people to enjoy. Such nourishment usually begets great thirst, a proof that it is heating and more harmful than beneficial.

I am greatly in favor of milk diet. Yet I must here caution weakly people against taking too much, and recommend them to take it in small quantities, and eat with it black rye bread.

Once a lady asked me what she should take between meals as she often suddenly experienced great hunger. She thought ham, sausage, black-puddings and such like would perhaps be of advantage.

I advised her, in such a case, to eat a piece of good rye bread and to drink some sugar water which would nourish and make good blood. After some time I met this lady again and she thanked me for my good advice which she had taken with great advantage.

A glass of milk and a bit of black bread is of equal service and is for those who can assimilate milk even preferable. Avoid overeating. Those who take small quantities of food get more good from it, because it is much more easily and rapidly digested. An overfilled stomach cannot accomplish the work required of it by unreasonable men. Allow me to recall the old proverb "Cease eating while it still tastes good" that is, before you are completely satisfied.

As regards beverages, a mother in a certain condition should drink neither beer nor wine. Beer fattens the body but gives it no elastic strength; it is a stimulating remedy whose consumption is pleasant.

Beer drinkers are poor in blood, however big a corporation or stoutness of body they carry about with them. Their bodies are only spongy and the internal organs are withered and flabby.

I wish to impress upon mothers that wine does not nourish; a piece of black bread which may cost less than sixpence contains more nourishment than two or three bottles of wine of the best quality. A mother must not forget that she has to nourish not only herself but her posterity.

The physical condition of her offspring is formed by the worth or worthlessness of the parental diet. Sweet delicacies and dainties I do not advise but to a Mother I decidedly forbid them.

Coffee, chocolate, tea and similar fashionable drinks have but little nourishment in them, and to a Mother they are

certainly harmful.

These beverages are only palatable.

If a Mother drinks coffee twice daily she has just so often taken a good opening medicine which clears the stomach of all nourishment.

Malt-coffee has nourishment from the grain, but bread-and brenn-soup are decidedly preferable. Brandy and the various alcoholic drinks are nothing but poison. They act like tire which burns and destroys the body. A Mother who consumes these drinks ruins both herself and her offspring. If a Mother be thirsty, let her choose the drink offered her by the Creator. It is also the cheapest.

Drink, when thirsty, but if possible in small quantities only.

Thirst is a sign that fluid is lacking, but this can be supplied to the body in the shape of water.

If all Mothers would nourish themselves in the prescribed way, how healthy and happy they would be! How much more they could lay by in their money boxes which are so often rifled to procure nourishment which is merely so called, but in reality is nothing more than an expensive luxury which ruins the health, empties the purse, and destroys the prosperity and content of the family.

Section 2. The Dress of the Mother.

One might well suppose that to give advice on such a matter would be quite superfluous.

I have, however, learned by experience that Mothers need it greatly, in order that they do not injure themselves by their dress, and that they may by precept and example instruct others of their sex.

When one thinks of the trouble, care, toil and sacrifice endured by a good housewife, it does seem almost out of place to warn her against vanity.

But it is not so; unluckily vanity and love of dress have established themselves so firmly that it I seems to me quite necessary to give advice as to how a Mother should dress.

The dress of the Mother should be simple, without slavish obedience to the latest fashion; it should, in fact, fulfil its function of protecting the body against cold and nakedness. Wear only linen on the body. The dress should not be laced or fastened too tightly; it should be loose round the throat, so as not to contract it, which has been the cause of much ill health. The blood cannot properly circulate when the throat is tightly bound, and so it clots and forms wens and swellings and lays the foundation of much mischief.

I will not say a word about tight-lacing. Every Mother should be sensible enough not to yield to such a folly, for it is just by tight-lacing that many women ruin themselves.

A wife need try to please no one but her husband. At the same time, I hope there are no men so stupid as to require from their wives that they should look like wasps, and so

lace themselves as to bring their own lives and those of their children into danger.

So stupid and so ignorant can no man be. Wives, however, obey your husbands (even in the matter of dress); for this is your sacred duty.

Garters play no unimportant part in the health; by wearing them too tight women get varicose veins. They never will confess to wearing them tight, they invariably say "My Garters are quite loose" so they may be in the morning but during the last half of the day the feet and legs swell, the garter presses, and obstructions arise.

The wearing of shoes too warm and narrow very prejudicial, especially those furnished with so called elastic bands.

This make of shoe produces open ulcers on the feet by disturbing the circulation of the blood. Neither should the clothing be too warm. Fifty years ago among ten thousand country people who spent most of their time in the open air in all sorts of weather, you would not have found three who wore drawers; now nearly all people in all places wear them.

From this debilitating habit many diseases arise.

Even woolen drawers are worn which are peculiarly harmful; for the warmer the lower part of the body is kept so much the surer will the blood flow into it from the feet, and if you see people without natural warmth shivering, even beside a hot fire, you may decide at once that they wear woolen drawers.

If in winter people wear an extra garment over their summer costume, it is quite enough for health - this applies to men as well as to women.

It would give me unspeakable satisfaction and be of endless service to the Mothers and children if my words could induce them to dress simply and suitably in summer and in winter, and thus avoid all debilitation.

Section 3. Applications of Water.

If every career, of whatever rank, has its own difficulties which often make heavy calls on human nature, a very special burden rests on the Mothers of famines.

Thus it is that the Wife whose organism is undoubtedly weaker than that of her husband unfortunately often succumbs far too early.

I therefore impart to the Mothers a good piece of advice viz. "Regard water as your medicine chest."

Use water sensibly and you will be able to pursue your calling with much more elasticity and strength, you will be spared many infirmities and your life will be much easier. Also your mental qualities will keep their strength binger, for the effect of water reaches even these and makes them stronger and more enduring.

As I write these lines I seem to hear as with one voice the cry of many mothers "I should like to know what I have to do, I want to be a good housemother, to fulfil my duties faithfully, and to be capable of following my calling. "

To all who ask for my advice I would say water is the first of purifying agents. And as cleanliness should be a predominating virtue in the household I say "Mothers wash your whole bodies twice or thrice a week on rising."

This ablution must be done in a minute and the body left to dry of itself. This is not much to require and has good results. Another way of bracing and strengthening oneself is for the Mother to take weekly two or three half-baths lasting only a second or two. She should go into the water

up to under the arms, count one, two, three and out of it again.

Such a bath braces the system, strengthens and keeps the blood circulating properly and produces much natural warmth.

Above all it protects the lower part of the body, keeps it active and secures it from many infirmities.

It certainly does not seem much to require of a Mother that she should take three such simple half-baths in a week. They may be taken when she rises in the morning, or at any time more convenient to her, except for the two hours immediately after the midday meal.

To bathe before going to bed is not quite advisable as it sometimes prevents sleep.

Oil the other hand it has a good effect if the bath is taken in the night getting out of bed for it and going back to it immediately after it.

I also recommend from time to time the wearing of a shirt or chemise dipped in warm hay-flower water and then wrapping the body in a blanket. This cleanses the body from decomposed juices. Such a shirt might be used once every fourteen days.

I should like to impose on Mothers the practice of going bare-foot, at least partially, as a sacred duty, because by it the body is braced, the blood drawn from the head, and the heat, which is formed in the body by work, is diminished. Those who go barefoot constantly rarely suffer either headache or toothache.

The Mother who is mostly occupied with manual labor can easily walk barefoot morning and evening during her work.

Now however comes the question: Should the Mother use water also in certain conditions? And to this I answer, it is exactly in those conditions that water is such an excellent remedy viz. in the form of whole washings and half baths.

If the Mother takes three or four half baths in the week, they will keep her in the best and strongest condition - the baths however should never last longer than two or three seconds.

Whole washings I recommend also to be taken two or three times a week.

Other applications, including the shirt, I do not advise in these certain conditions of women, they are in no way necessary.

It may be that a mother will say: "I am quite healthy, there is nothing the matter with me, am I also to try the water-cure?" I answer this with another question: "Is it good to wash the face and hands daily?" Certainly.

Then it is equally good to wash the whole body.

One cleanses the rooms of the house often, even though they be not very dirty, in order to prevent their getting so. The body deserves the same treatment if one would avoid the rise of disease. By the applications of water many evils are conquered which would otherwise break out later.

Many thousands of people complain of nerves. This would not be the case if they went bare-foot and used water.

My advice, however, is especially valuable to mothers who, if they follow it, will certainly have cause to thank me.