

Should Mothers Fight Their Children's Battles?

SHOULD mothers fight their children's battles? To all mothers, this question looms up, colours the earth, the air, the sky, at one time or another during their children's development. There is the Big Bully at school; and there is little John. . . . "Oh, leave them alone," cries father when she gets all worked up about little John. "He will have to go through it sooner or later; and the less parents interfere the better a boy gets on at school. Why, when I was a youngster——"

But mother interrupts impatiently. For her child is always so much more liable to hurt than his father. "John is sensitive," she says. "He came home today, his nose pouring with blood. It was that horrid boy again. You know Robert, that aloof attitude of yours can be carried too far."



But it isn't that the father is indifferent. He loves his small son, his little daughter, with passionate tenderness. If he could he would divert all pain, all harm from them. It makes him, who should be their strong protector, their God, feel futile when they suffer. If they are ill the mother can dash about importantly, and do things, thrust a thermometer into their mouths, get hot water bottles, give a dose, stick on a poultice; while he just stand about, impotent, wrung by anguish.

When he sees his boys are having a hard time, being "put upon" by others, having their little noses punched, their heads sat upon, he would like to dash out and deal chastisement where chastisement is due. But he holds his arm. Sympathy, he feels, is also out of place, writes Helen Hope in the "News Chronicle." The youngsters must learn to fight their own battles.

School is recognised as the training ground par excellence for after life. Here things begin to take on relative importances and values. And the whole scheme and system of character-forming this implies is upset if a strong, cruel and thoughtless boy is allowed to tyrannise over the young and small fry.

A mother will make a mistake, however, if she angrily tackles a school bully herself, or speaks to his mother who will, naturally, defend her son. The matter is one for the school to deal with, and one day, without saying anything to her children, she should go quietly to the Head and lay before him this information. Not because the complaint specifically concerns her own child, but because he should know about it, as an item of importance in the life of the school.

For the modern master is not tolerant of ragging. Versed in psychology, he knows the dire effects of bullying on tender minds, and the complexes of fear and inferiority thus set up. He knows that one overbearing and cruel boy can do untold harm in a school, not only among his wretched little victims, but also in spreading the habit of cruelty.

She need not worry that her boy will suffer as the result of her visit. The master, if he is wise, will not have the two boys hailed in front of him to face the mother, thus spreading the news in the school that the smaller boy had "told" and therefore was a "muff." He will watch, secure evidence, and take measures to deal with the bully, and see that the tendency to cruelty is wiped out.

In a way, perhaps, it is right to assume that things that are regarded as of great importance at the time, do "come out in the wash." And the young ones must learn to stand up for themselves. If they come crying every time anything happens and expect mother to go out and fight their battles for them, her hands will be full.

And they will never learn self reliance and courage. Sometimes it is necessary for a mother, however much she loathes it, to stand by and let two combatants, of which her son is one, fight it out. If they are evenly matched, her interference can do no good.

But, of course, fighting is a fool's game; and children must be educated into thinking of better ways. The only thing a mother can do is to give her boys and girls a groundwork of character which, because it will enable them to see things straightly and to deal fairly with others, will sustain them through troublous times.

I think, too, that gaiety and light-heartedness are grand bulwarks against the petty storms of life. When the children come in with a long tale of woe, instead of encouraging them to self-pity they might be taught to laugh at things. To turn the tragic incident into a farce, even when one is the centre of it, is an art that cannot be too early learnt; and it carries one a long way.

Marconi's Latest Experiments

Marchese Marconi intends to start within the next few days on a new cruise in his steam yacht Elettra for the purpose of carrying out further experiments in the transmission and reception of micro-waves—wireless waves of less than one-metre length.

In addition to repeating and checking his long-distance tests of last year, Marchese Marconi has planned a new series of investigations into the propagation properties of these waves.

It is hoped that his investigations will lead to further important discoveries, opening the way to the wider application of micro-waves for wireless telephone and telegraph services.

Elaborate preparations for the new cruise have been made for months past at the Marconi works in Italy, on board the yacht Elettra, and at Marchese Marconi's experimental micro-wave stations at Santa Margherita Ligure and Rocca di Papa, near Rome.