

and wrought therein the greatest of all miracles, and took therefrom the baby which He placed in her arms.

The task is not so difficult as it appears if it be undertaken in time. And the time to undertake it is when the child asks his first question about these things. Every boy and girl wants to know where the kittens and the puppies, the lambs and the calves, and the foals come from. Every boy and girl is eager to learn the origin of the new brother or sister who has come into the family. The children will ask questions, and the questions make your opportunity. The greatest mistake you can make is to turn your little daughter's question aside with a false answer or with a fairy tale. Don't tell her the doctor brought the baby; don't fall back on any of the poetic fictions like that about the stork. Tell her simply and straightforwardly as much as she is able to take in. Satisfy her natural and legitimate curiosity as far as you can. And make a bargain with her that when she has any further questions to ask about the matter, she shall bring them to you, and you shall answer them. If a mother turns aside her child's question with a laugh or with a lie; if she tells her that she must not speak of these things, and gives her to understand that her curiosity was wrong, then her child will never come back to her again for information on that subject. Wherever she goes to find it out, it will not be to her mother. But, if her mother answers her honestly and simply at the first, then there will be established between them a sacred confidence which will never be broken, which will be among the mother's greatest pleasures, and which will be a sacred memory for the child all her life.

Many women mean to tell their girls some day; but they put it off too long. The time to do it is early. The time to impart instruction is as soon as the child wants to know. The lesson is most easily taught then, and it is then that it sinks into the child's mind without any accompanying erroneous associations of shame and wrong. When that first lesson has been taught in time, it is not difficult to add to it in due course pure, noble, elevating thoughts concerning the powers that are about to waken in the growing boy or girl. It is a simple matter to warn them against the dan-

gers that may be incurred, and to save them from many bitter anxieties and fears. And it can readily be understood between mother and daughter, that, like some other physical functions, these are not usually discussed in company; that all matters pertaining to them are to be reserved for private communications. But let a daughter know that whatever she wishes to know her mother will tell her. That is the great point. Let there be an established confidence between mother and child. The sense that her mother has treated her as worthy of confidence, has trusted her and sympathised with her, will draw that child to her mother and bind her to her with a tie that will grow more close and more sacred and more tender as the years go by, as she realises more and more how much she owes to her mother's wisdom and love.

The time will soon come when the dangers which threaten purity from unscrupulous men and women in the world ought to be spoken of. I am very sure that many girls have been ruined, as the phrase goes, and many a boy too, through ignorance. Do any of you know a play of Robert Browning's called "A Blot on the 'Scutcheon'"? It is the simplest of all his plays, and very tender and beautiful. The heroine is Mildred Tresham, and she falls. But in the case of both her and her lover her fall is the consequence rather of her ignorance than of any sinful impulse. And the cry in which she bewails her fate is surely the most pathetic that ever escaped a girl's lips: "I was so young, I loved him so, I had no mother, God forgot me, and I fell." But it was not God who forgot her; it was her guardian who failed in a most urgent duty towards her. What about the girls who have their mothers? And how often is it far less the girl's sin than the mother's, who should have told her things, and never did?

A girl, as well as a man, should know what evil there is in the world. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. We allow our girls to travel freely nowadays; the conditions of modern life compel them to go out into situations often away from home. It is nothing short of cruel to let them go without telling them what sort of people there are in the world, both men and women, and what sort of

people they may meet. That a girl should be wooed and won in marriage who does not know what marriage is, is a shame and a sin. Girls ought to be taught—and taught by their mothers—the simple facts about marriage, and the highest ideals of marriage. They should be led to demand the highest ideal from any man who aspires to marry them. They should be taught to look for a man whose moral character is above reproach, a man without a past. That is the surest way to raise the standard which prevails among men. You women have so much in your hands. You demand, and rightly, that the standard of morality should be the same for both sexes, that the man who sins should be as severely condemned as the woman who sins. You have it in your own hands. It is for you to pronounce the condemnation. Make it clear that a man with a stain on his record has no entry into your society, no footing in your drawing-room, no chance of marrying your daughter; and a great deal will have been accomplished. But while men are aware that among the girls from whom they hope to choose a wife there are few who even know the existence of the sort of sins which they commit, let alone any who will refuse their advances because of their past guilt, is it any wonder that they themselves think as little of their misconduct as the women seem to do. It is for the women to demand a high standard of the men, just as the men demand a high standard of the women; and every girl ought to know both what a high standard really means and how essential to her own welfare and happiness a high standard is.

I speak of these things to you, because it is within the reach of every one of you to do something real and practical towards bringing about a better state of things in this connection. You have your own children, and you can begin, as our Saviour told the Gadarene demoniac to begin, with your own home. You can see to it that none of your children grow up ignorant, and that none of them learn from other and less reverent lips those essential things which they should learn from your own. You have, too, your circle of friends, among whom these matters are sometimes spoken of; and you can bring your influence to bear, now here and now there, on behalf of a franker,