

THE WOMAN'S PART.

(Paper read before Takapuna Union
(by Mrs Waghorn.)

The world to-day is passing through a most terrible time of darkness, suffering is everywhere; for the flower of the nation's manhood is being destroyed upon the battlefields of Europe and Asia. This sad time with its attendant ills, could not have come to pass had not the civilised world needed it; for, in this way, God has to teach a lesson to us, His children. If the world is to benefit by the lesson, and if we would save humanity the horrors of war in the future, we women must do our part. More is needed from us than the giving of our men to fight. Unless this is recognised, the sad lesson will need to be gone through again and again, until, by suffering it is learned.

What is the great part for the women to play? Is it to train up the children in such a manner that the world may become better through them.

When reading the other day, I came up this beautiful quotation, "The World moves forward on the feet of the little children." After being struck by the beauty of the thought, I could not help but see it's truth; for upon the efforts made to-day for the children, and the success which attends these efforts, depends the future of mankind. When our work here is done, it is in their hands that we shall leave the welfare of our country, the future of our beloved Empire and the training of the next generation. We have always to remember that "the race has not only to continue but progress," so each succeeding generation should be a step in advance of the last.

The privilege and responsibility of this great work of training the children, and it is the greatest work in the world, lies largely with the mothers and the women. They have in their hands, the power to make or mar the character of the children and through them the character of the nation.

Most mothers desire that all things good and beautiful shall come to their children. They plan and contrive ways and means, and often debar themselves even of necessities that they may give them the things they consider good. If we ask ourselves:

What is the most beautiful thing that a child can have? In nine cases out of ten, nay, I believe in ninety-nine cases out of one hundred, the answer will be a noble character. Character-building is really the greatness of life. Riches may bring comfort and luxury; they only exist for this world—no one can carry them into the Great Beyond. Our character, with its many qualities, is the only thing that we take with us. Therefore, it is that which is lasting, not that which is transitory which we need to strive for and live for.

The first thing for a mother to do is to set her own house in order. She must look to herself to see if she is all she would wish to be, for it is by her example that she will best teach her children. The character of the Christ is ever before her as an example, so her life must show the love, the tenderness, the truth and the purity she would wish to see in her little ones. Let her ask herself: Do I show all the beauties of character that I would have my children associate with the name of mother? Then she can set to work to build into her character the qualities lacking, and to strengthen those that are weak. The every day life will supply plenty of opportunities for this work, and the conscious effort will gain for her a control over herself, which is so necessary for all who have to do with the training of children.

Love is the most powerful force in the Universe. True mother-love is the greatest and purest of all earthly love; it is nearer the Love of God because of that purity. It calls for continuous self-sacrifice. The mother first gives of her body that a soul may be provided with a physical form, in which to learn the lesson of life. Later she gives both time and thought to the upbringing of her children.

A mother's love needs to be strong, for she has always to keep before her the true welfare of the child, or she may err by being too indulgent. This would be disastrous, for it would make her little one self-indulgent. Now, self-indulgence, with its sins of sloth and idleness, undermines character and does not bring out the application necessary for life. Too many mothers, in their desire to sacrifice themselves upon the altar of love think only of what they can do and not of how they can best train a young life to show its love in service.

It is mistaken kindness to do everything for a child. He can be taught from earliest years not only to help himself, but to help others, to show kindness to animals, and to care for plants. A child loves to help; there are so many ways in which he can be of use. In training him to think of others you are training him to be a thorough Christian. Can he be other when he has learned from his mother something of the loving tenderness of the Christ, as shown in service to all?

It is well for a child when he comes to a home where he is provided with a pure, clean body, and surrounded by love and tenderness; under these circumstances he develops quickly to his best, and a good start is given to a life.

Obedience is a lesson that cannot be learned too young, and once learned, will be a great help through childhood. It does not mean taking away of all liberty, for, within bounds, a child needs to be free to develop along his own lines.

Timid, self-distrustful children are best helped by the judicious use of praise and encouragement; in this way they gain a certain amount of confidence in their own powers. Encourage the good rather than call attention to the bad; faults are never remedied by calling attention to them. Mothers should try to leave the word "don't" out of their vocabulary.

It will be remembered that the more flowers there are in a garden the less room for weeds; so cultivate the flowers of a child's character and allow the weeds to die.

Anger should never be shown in a child's presence, for it will arouse anger in the child, and possibly fear—fear of the results of a mother's anger. This in turn, may lead to untruth, which is nearly always the result of fear, in this way much will be done to a child's character, and a bad start given to a life.

An old friend of mine who has given both time and thought to the study of children and their development, always advises that they be allowed, when playing happily, to work out the game without interruption, as this helps the continuity of thought. The idea of doing away with corporal punishment is gradually gaining ground, and should in time become general.