

II.

THE TEACHER'S POINT OF VIEW.

By K. MASTERMAN.

Miss Mason tells us that Personality is the sacred birth-right of every child. One of the reasons why a person is a mystery is because by the word personality we mean that part of us which goes on into the next life.

We are perhaps sometimes apt to be too negative in our ideas about personality. We know that we must not impress our personality on the children and we bear this in mind, but do we give enough thought to the ways in which we can help the personalities of the children to flourish, remembering that the more a person a child is, the better he is fitted for life? Because personality is sacred we must see that it has scope to flourish. It is obvious that personality cannot flourish in any artificial atmosphere or in "cotton-wool" surroundings. The most natural surroundings for a child are the family circle and he derives great benefit from having to adapt himself to circumstances, and he gains experience by the way in which he deals with the little daily happenings which make up life.

One of the most important parts of the school-day is the time given to unsupervised play. Everyone knows the importance and value of organised games, but unsupervised playtime is invaluable for the opportunities it gives for personality to flourish freely. With small children of course, it is necessary to have a teacher in the room always, but during the time set apart for unsupervised play she should practise "masterly inactivity." There is perhaps a danger of children tending to lose their individuality at school; for example there is nearly always a school craze to which practically all the children succumb; also there is that feeling of "must be the same as the others." One remedy for this can be found in opportunities for discussion and the free expression of opinions, with the teacher in the background ready to give any necessary help. In this connection we should remember not to probe the children's feelings; sometimes we may hear a remark like this, "Oh, I do love that birch tree," or "That bluebell is so beautiful"; it spoils and shatters the child's feeling for beauty if we ask blunderingly, "Why?"

Another way in which we can foster the flourishing of personality is to give the children opportunities for choosing between ideas ; this is valuable in aiding the development of a person. A Liberal Education gives chances for this and will present living ideas.

Neither a Utilitarian nor a Sensory Education takes personality into consideration ; the first trains children to be efficient and the second teaches without presenting ideas.

An atmosphere that is pervaded by the teacher's overwhelming and emotional personality is death to the personality of the child. But the teacher may show her personality in intellectual matters, she can show her enthusiasm for and interest in a poem or book or picture.

There are one or two dangers of the effect on children of a teacher's overwhelming personality which are sometimes apt to be forgotten. First the children become exhausted. They are so responsive that the continual effort leads to nervous pressure and they suffer physically and mentally. Secondly, personal magnetism is not allowed as a tool and is not necessary to secure attention. The effort must be made by the children themselves and from the first. We must not use personal magnetism as a means for securing obedience ; this is an easy pitfall but we must remember that the end does not justify the means. We have to discipline ourselves to prevent using the wrong way, which is sometimes the easiest way, of gaining our end. This will be easier when we realise the immense benefit it is to children to be able to use self-discipline and make themselves obey of their own free will. This power is one which they will find more valuable the older they grow.

Next we come to personal influence as one of the tools which are sometimes used against the sacredness of personality. We can divide influence into (1) our influence over children (2) children's influence over each other. First of all there is the power of unconscious influence brought to bear by our thoughts and actions. People realise to-day more than they ever have done before how great is the power of thought. A great many of our thoughts are unconscious and when we feel frightened by this let us remember that if we have the right attitude of mind our unconscious thoughts are more likely to be of the right kind. We can deal with our conscious thoughts by the power of thought-turning. Realising the power of unconscious influence we can see how potent conscious personal

influence must be and how it would swamp personality. Our attitude towards children must be bracing: anything like favouritism or the wrong use of sympathy has an enervating effect. We all of us know grown-ups who have "supporting" friends on whom they depend for advice and moral support. This shows how disastrous and how lasting is the weakening effect produced by personal influence. The right course for us teachers is to be quite natural with children, and to realise when we are using personal influence and to pull ourselves up and stop.

Children are more susceptible to influence than older people, as they have less experience of life. They are often more affected by contemporary influence than by that of grown-ups. We have to be able to deal with the type of child who is the ring-leader of a clique; we have to find out the best way of preventing the dangers to personality incurred by children who slavishly follow this leader. The two ways open to us are either to separate the clique by arbitrary means or to let the members learn by experience what a weakening effect a dominating influence has on them.

Another tool used against the Sacredness of Person is that of suggestion; this is one of the most insidious ways of undermining character. It is much easier to use it with young children because older ones have greater powers of resistance. The use of suggestion denies children the discipline of failure.

The *Zeitgeist* at the time when Miss Mason wrote the *Home Education* series was "The Sacredness of the Person." It is the same to-day, and alongside we have the modern *Zeitgeist* of self-expression. Miss Mason tells us that a child cannot express anything that he has not assimilated at some time or another, but he tinges it with his individuality when giving it back. We must give opportunities for the expression of originality, we can do so in Handicrafts, Gardening, Musical Composition, and all forms of creative work.

Self-expression becomes dangerous when the individual forgets that he is a member of a community and only a unit of society. Self-control must go alongside. The kind of self-expression which gives vent to the feelings is likely to be harmful. We must show children that we cannot always live our lives to the full and that the best way to do it is in service to others. The right kind of discipline used from the start of a child's life should prevent that feeling of revolt

against authority that often comes at the age of seventeen or eighteen. Another danger of self-expression is the danger of eccentricity if the child is allowed to develop one talent to the exclusion of other things.

Physical offences against the child's person are of a different sort now-a-days from the time of our grandparents. We offend chiefly in this respect if we create an atmosphere of fuss, worry or hurry; this gives a feeling of physical unrest as well as mental disturbance.

Psychology and psycho-analysis are two more currents of thought which bear upon the subject of personality. Miss Mason tells us in the *Essay* that it is indecent to probe the thoughts of the unconscious mind, and here is a warning to us that psycho-analysis should not be used except in very extreme and abnormal cases and then of course always by an expert. We can see that otherwise it would be an attack on personality. Professor James is comforting about psychology, he says, "a teacher's attitude towards a child is concrete and ethical and a psychologist's is abstract and analytical."

If we remember that every child is born with mind complete as well as body and that he only lacks experience and is not a different kind of being from ourselves we shall treat him with the respect due to the Sacredness of his Person and personality.

III.

THE HOME-LIFE POINT OF VIEW.

By MRS. EVAN CAMPBELL.

I have tried to express myself in the light—and alas! also in the darkness—of my own experience.

In considering Miss Mason's inspired statement on page 46 of *School Education* that Psychology is progressive and that education must touch at all points the living thought of the age, I am deeply convinced that we must study the psychology of the day, and examine its bearings to the philosophy which we hold, in order that we may not judge without personal and constantly renewed research into the