

CHAPTER 18: COMPANIONSHIPS

1. Have not companions and other people who are round about children, a vast influence upon them for good or for evil?

Yes; we have already seen that children are so imitative and impressionable, that, without any thought or intention on their part, they copy the sayings and doings, acquire the character, and imbibe the spirit, of those persons with whom they associate. We all know how easily men and women are influenced by their companionships, and this is far more likely to be the case with regard to children. Intercourse with a stranger, sometimes for only a single day, will make a mark upon the character of a child which will endure for years to come, while anyone whom the children very much admire, if brought into close communion with them, will be imitated right off. Therefore you can always calculate with certainty that the people, whether young or old, whom you allow to be round about your children, will have an immense influence in moulding and fashioning their character.

It should also be borne in mind, in considering the influence of one child upon another, or of one man upon another, that there is in all character, whether good or bad, a kind of instinct which, so to speak, makes its possessor take pleasure in propagating it in others. A good man has a delight in making others good – a bad man not only instinctively hates goodness and loves badness, and finds pleasure in the company of those who do the same, but seizes every opportunity of making others like himself.

2. To what class of the associations of children do these remarks specially apply?

(1.) Of almost first importance, they apply to servants. The influence of servants over the minds of children, for good or evil, is almost boundless. Servants have often a far greater power to form the characters of the children than have the parents themselves. This will be seen by considering that children are necessarily thrown so much into the company of servants and friends in their walks out of doors, in the

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kitchen, and elsewhere. If children are imitative and do copy the example of those with whom they are most thrown, as we have already seen, then it follows as a matter of course, that what the servants are, the children are very likely to be also.

(2.) The position of authority in which servants are placed inevitably leads the children to look up to them, and think they must be right in all they do and teach. What more natural to the little child, who knows next to nothing of the world outside, than for him to imitate the sayings and doings of the servants?

(3.) The greater age of servants, and the power they possess to make children happy or miserable, give them a great influence over their minds and lives.

A child will be very likely to suppose that age and experience mean wisdom, and therefore take as pure gospel everything a servant tells him.

3. From what has been said, I can easily see that the influence of servants upon children must be very great. Can you state any particulars in which such influence is likely to be exerted in a wrong direction?

Yes. The following are only some of the varied ways in which the influence of bad servants is often directly against such a godly training as I wish you to give your children.

(1.) Servants will wrongly influence children by foolish indulgences, which will often go far to counteract the labour of those parents who are striving to make their children obedient and humble.

(2.) Servants with impure minds will, and do, often inform children of uncleanness and also of matters far beyond their years, which they ought never, as children, to hear about.

(3.) Ungodly servants will frequently inculcate deception and falsehood, teaching and encouraging children to practise the same. Some will sneer at religion behind the backs of the parents, while they will be sleek and apparently very pious to their faces,

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thus not only teaching deception, but illustrating it by their own conduct.

(4.) Ungodly servants will often make children object to anything like strict parental control. They will make them think that they are more hardly done by than other children, leading them to kick against correction or chastisement, and thus sowing in their minds the seeds of future rebellion and misery.

(5.) They will often lead the children into bad company or places.

How common it is for servants to take children, as a special favour, where their parents would not wish them to go, after getting a promise not to tell!

4. Seeing that servants have so powerful an influence in moulding the character of children, ought not parents to exercise great care in their selection?

Undoubtedly they ought. Nevertheless, we fear that very little anxiety is felt on this subject. A mother will make the most exact enquiries as to the capacity of a servant for doing her work; as to her honesty in dealing with her money; her truthfulness, sobriety, civility, and personal appearance – in order that she may attend to the business of the family and cut a good figure at the table – but, alas! often she will scarcely make any enquiry at all as to those qualities which have to do with the formation of the character of her children, with whose daily lives that maid will be as much mixed up as herself, and on whose influence their happiness, both for time and eternity, will so much depend. Thus she will place her children under the care and control of perfect strangers without concern, and with very little supervision or investigation afterwards.

5. Ought parents, when they act thus, to be surprised to find all manner of false, mean, and unclean habits generated and practised amongst their children?

Not in the least. Would it not indeed be a miracle if it were otherwise? I have no doubt that multitudes of children are inoculated with all manner of moral diseases by servants – diseases of mind and soul, far more to be deplored than any bodily diseases could possibly be. If parents do not want such a result – if they wish their

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children to be good and godly, they must seek godly servants; and if they will not be at the trouble to do this, they must suffer the consequences – at least, their poor children must.

6. Then do you recommend the employment of godly servants only?

Most emphatically we do. That is, we think parents should use every possible means to obtain such, and should be very careful that they are not deceived by mere profession. But failing this, if those engaged are not converted, the first serious business, with regard to the master and mistress, is to get them saved; and if, after trying every reasonable method they do not succeed, we think the domestics should be discharged and others tried.

But we are quite sure that in a family where God is served with wholehearted faithfulness, little difficulty will be experienced in this direction. We have seldom found much in such cases. Where master, mistress, and children, and everybody are "down" on their "help," whether man or woman, to give up sin and turn to God, there are only two alternatives for the servant – to yield or run. They usually for their own comfort's sake give up, and become members of the heavenly household. Any way, there cannot well be greater madness than willingly to keep in close association with children, servants under the power of the devil, whose conversation and example are directly in favour of wickedness, and consequently opposed to the Holiness and happiness of the family.

7. Ought parents, in seeking servants, to be satisfied with the bare assertion that the parties seeking the situation are "religious"?

Parents must be on their guard against hypocrites and shams here, as they are elsewhere. We don't suppose there are any more counterfeits among the much abused servant class than there are in other classes of society. We have no doubt that if the family is associated with really godly people, and ordinary care is exercised, they will not very frequently be seriously imposed upon. Truly religious servants will be really glad to live in truly religious families.

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8. What other companionships have intimately to do with the formation of character in children?

Their PLAYMATES and SCHOOLFELLOWS.

All that has been said of the influence of servants applies with equal, if not increased, force to their companions in the schoolroom, or their mates in the playground. Children exercise a peculiarly powerful and fascinating influence over each other. When an intimacy has been formed, they will unbosom themselves to children of their own age with greater freedom than they will to their own parents or guardians, and they will impress their own character, whatever that character may be, on each other with the greatest facility, and the most lasting endurance. How important, then, that the companions of your children should be good!

"Can any man put fire in his bosom and not be burned?" Do not evil communications corrupt the good manners of men and women, who have had the opportunity of profiting by years of teaching, experience, failure, and suffering? How much more then will your children, simple, untaught, and inexperienced as they are in wrongdoing and its consequences, inevitably be corrupted if you foolishly permit them to associate with children who are evil and corrupt? Do not allow the devil, or anyone else, to deceive you on this head. If you permit the means of corruption to be employed, nothing can prevent the natural result. It is as certain as anything very well can be.

9. But do not parents see this, and exercise every possible care in the selection of companions for their children?

Alas! no. The majority of persons are positively blind – we were going to say positively insane – on this subject. They take very little note of the moral and spiritual character of the companions and playmates of their children. Many fathers and mothers who will read this book are very particular as to the character of the people with whom they associate themselves. They would be shocked at the bare idea of visiting, and being visited by, gamblers, liars, thieves, swearers, cheats, tyrants, or people who are filthy in life and conduct; on the contrary, quite a number of them would not be content with

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morality only, but draw the line somewhere about church membership – yet those same parents allow their children to herd with companions who, they know, or might know if they would take the trouble to enquire, are in their hearts and lives just such characters as we have enumerated; and even worse, if that is possible. That much of this is hidden away from masters and parents is largely, if not solely, owing to the added sins of hypocrisy and cunning on the part of the children, by which they are enabled to conceal the real state of things and want of industry and sense on the part of those in authority to find it out.

10. What course do parents ordinarily take to discover the moral character of the companions of their children?

I am afraid they have little concern, if any at all, about the moral and spiritual character of their children's companions. In many instances they are quite satisfied if these belong to families of their own standing, and if there is no particular stain upon their character – and even concerning this, they will not put themselves out of the way to enquire. Other parents will allow their children to pick out their companions themselves, or at most get up an acquaintance with the children of neighbours. In view of this, and what we have said in answer to the last question, is it not strange that anyone should wonder where the bad qualities come from, which are unexpectedly developed in their children?

If those parents knew that their children had been associating with some of their schoolfellows who had just recovered from small-pox or some contagious malady, they would not be in the least surprised to see symptoms of the same disease show themselves. Indeed, they would be much astonished if such manifestations did not appear. Why then should parents be amazed when their children grow up to lie, deceive, teach, and practise all manner of uncleanness, when they, the parents, have allowed them to associate with others who regularly do these things?

11. But how are parents to know the real character of those whom they allow to be companions with their children?

They must be at THE TROUBLE to ascertain it. As we have already recommended with

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regard to servants, enquire for yourselves. Watch them with your own eyes and ears – examine your children about any new playmates and comrades that may have turned up, before there has been time for any harm to be done by their influence or example. Do not be taken off your guard by being informed that the new-comers are religious, or that they "love Jesus." That you want to know is whether they are PURE, TRUE, AND OBEDIENT.

Some children, as well as grown-up people, are possessed now-a-days with the false and dangerous notion that if they hold certain opinions and believe certain statements in the Bible, moral character – that is, truth and goodness-are not of too much importance. But this must not satisfy you. You want faith and works. Faith without works, whether in children or grown-up people, will be held by you, we suppose, in about the same estimation as it was by the Apostle James, who pronounced it "dead." We all know something of the uselessness and corruption of death.

12. What then is to be done to find companions for the children?

If you cannot find Salvationists, or those who are Salvationists in spirit, if not in name, and who, you have reason to believe, are really and truly good, let your children do without companions until God shall bring them across the track of some who are; or until they themselves shall be the means of converting some of their relatives or friends. It is of a great deal more importance that your children should be good than that they should be amused.

13. But what about sending children to schools?

If you cannot manage to get an education for your children otherwise, then you must, I suppose, send them to school, in which case let it be a day school if possible; but as you love the souls of your children, and honestly wish them to be made and kept real children of the Living God, prevent them having more association with their schoolmates than is absolutely unavoidable. Let them mix as little as possible with them after school hours, going to and coming from the school alone, and keeping as much as possible by themselves in the playground.

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That is, unless they find some of the children to be real saints; and we trust the time is not far distant when a little squad of Salvation Soldiers will be found in every school in the land.

Make your children understand that they are to be separate as separate, in spirit and companionship, from the other boys and girls around them as they see you, their parents, are separated from the men and women with whom you are compelled to mix in the world in your business transactions.

In this case you must be prepared for them to suffer all manner of persecution, and, perhaps, be half killed for the testimony they must bear and the separate life they will have to live. But this you cannot help, and a martyr's school-life endured in their youth, may help them to bear the cross in after life. You must remember it will be a terrible ordeal for them, and you must stand by, and help them with all your might to be brave and faithful servants of the Master.

The next five paragraphs are written for our friends outside The Army:

14. Then you do not approve of boarding schools?

No, not as a rule. Most of those of which I have had any knowledge have seemed to me far more likely by their associations, spirit, and general influence, to develop and perfect children in pride, worldliness, and scepticism, than to make them humble and brave Soldiers of Jesus Christ. Indeed, to make children followers of Jesus Christ in any practical sense, that is in Holiness, and separation from the world, and in a life devoted to the Salvation of men, is the last thing contemplated in the ordinary boarding school. Not but that it is quite possible to be otherwise, and there are, doubtless, very remarkable exceptions, and the time may come when there will be schools all over the land, the great first object of which will be to make children into good Soldiers of Jesus Christ. At present this happy state of things appears a long way off.

In many schools there are doubtless superiors, masters, and governesses whose hearts and teaching are in favour of a true Christian life. But it is not from the masters

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that the evils are to be apprehended so much as from the children – many of whom come from godless, worldly homes, having been trained up in unbelief and self-will all their lives, or, at most, in a sentimental sort of religion, which is worse than none at all. Our advice, therefore, is, except you have found some school to which from personal observation you can testify that our remarks do not apply, and unless you are absolutely COMPELLED by circumstances to send your children away, KEEP THEM AT HOME.

15. How then is a suitable education to be obtained, supposing parents think it desirable, and can pay for it?

We answer, educate your children at home. Well qualified governesses and tutors can be obtained if you are able to pay for them. But here again you must be very careful as to character. Very superior classes can be attended in most large towns, where teaching of the first order can be procured, qualifying for the passing of the highest degrees in education.

If, in answer to this, it is alleged that such a mode is more costly, we reply that if you can afford it, the safety of the morals and the spiritual interests of your children is surely worth the extra outlay. Make a valuation of the purity of your children, and then consider whether any amount of money is too much to pay for it.

16. But if this mode of education be impossible, or will not enable the children to reach the standard of culture desired for them, what then?

If what you aim at cannot be accomplished without running the serious risk of ruining your children for time and eternity by sending them to the ordinary centres of education, and if this education cannot be obtained in any other way, you must be content with an INFERIOR EDUCATION, consoling yourself with the words of the Master: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" We suppose you can better endure the thought of your children being imperfectly versed in languages and the higher forms of culture, and deficient in that particular polish attained by a residence in the higher scholastic institutions, than that they should prove faithless to the Master, be untrue to His interests and loose in their

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morals, form alliances with His enemies, and run the risk of being finally damned!

17. Should not godly parents be willing to make any reasonable sacrifice in order to reside where they can have the advantage of association with real spiritual and godly people?

We need not say here that godly parents who have families (and those who have not) ought to be willing to forego almost any worldly advantages in order to reside near a Salvation Army Corps. Where there are children, they will have the advantages arising from connexion with a people who have real spiritual life and power, and among whom that training and those influences and associations can be had which will help children to save their souls, and be perfected in what is holy, useful, and Christ-like.

No notions of respectability, gain, honour, or friendship, ought to be put into competition for one moment with the Salvation of the children. And when parents do honestly desire this above all else, they will consider no earthly advantages in comparison with it. Yet, alas! it is not very uncommon to find parents professing to be followers of Jesus Christ and to be controlled by the supreme desire to save their own souls and the souls of their children, deliberately moving away from those associations so favourable to the Salvation of their children, and taking them to some distant place where they know and confess there are few soul helps, and few opportunities for usefulness; but where they will, on the contrary, be surrounded with all that is worldly, sensual, and devilish, and where they must run the terrible risk of ruining themselves and their children.

When we have inquired why this sacrifice has been made, and this terrible risk has been run, the answer has come back, "For the sake of a little superior education;" or, "To be near some relation;" or, "To gain a little more money;" or, "To make some advancement in the comfort and gain of this life in one form or other.

Alas! in too many of these cases, and in a very few years, too, the same fate overtakes them which overtook Lot. For worldly advantages, they have, like him, chosen to live in Sodom, and, like him, they find their reward in its destruction.

18. Will not all these prudent and careful arrangements to prevent evil



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communications and influences tend to make the children weak, insipid, men and women?

We think just the contrary, although some teachers maintain that there are certain advantages flowing from an individual experience of evil, even in children; by which we presume they mean that in the few cases in which children come out of the ordeal of evil associations and corrupt examples unscathed, they will be stronger in virtue for having passed through it. Supposing this were true, we are not to do evil that good may come, and our Lord's last prayer for his disciples was that they might be kept from the evil that was in the world; surely then it must be the duty of all good parents to shield their weak and inexperienced little ones from all avoidable evil. A drowning experience may serve some good end in the future; but who would recommend jumping into the water to gain it, at the terrible risk of being drowned?

We have had some practical experience in the training of children, and an extended opportunity of judging the relative merits of the various modes of training practised by parents and others in charge of children, and we would urge with all earnestness –

(1.) Keep your children ignorant of evil as long as you possibly can. The knowledge of it will come soon enough. When they have become matured, mentally and spiritually, in that knowledge of things, which God has arranged should come upon them in a gradual way – when they have come to see, as they only can see with age, the tremendous advantages of goodness in comparison with the enormous disadvantages of evil, they will be better able to withstand the depriving, polluting, and weakening effect which the knowledge of evil is calculated to bring.

(2.) Keep them innocent. If you keep them ignorant of evil, as we have just said, it will greatly help you to keep them innocent. It is, after all, easier to keep the seeds of sin out of the hearts of your children than to get them out when they have been sown and rooted there. If the tares are to be planted in the soul of your beautiful boy, the least you can do is to let the wheat have a good start and get well hold. There will then be some chance of a hardy growth, and a fair prospect of an abundant harvest for you, for your generation, and your Lord.

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19. But is not a training in the society of unconverted boys and girls, even though some of them should be very naughty, likely to make the children strong in love and goodness?

We think we have already replied to this, but would say something still further, and in doing so we shall, perhaps, be excused for adding to the illustration already used. It is said, we believe, of the colonists of some little island in the Pacific Ocean (Pitcairn Island) that they are remarkably good swimmers, and it is further said that they are so because of a somewhat remarkable method of teaching practised among them. As soon as the children can well walk, they are brought down to the sea-shore, the art of swimming is explained to them and then they are thrown into the water, and encouraged to do the best they can. It is said that after a considerable amount of struggling and sputtering, and many hair-breadth escapes from drowning, they find out the faculty of helping themselves, and, as we have said, become strong swimmers. That may be a very excellent plan for teaching the very useful art referred to; but we cannot recommend a plan of the same kind to parents or others for making their children strong swimmers in the sea of depravity. Nevertheless, this is very much like the plan generally adopted.

Take the school question for instance. Parents know, or they might know if they would be at the trouble to enquire, what the companionship of a school usually means to children of an ordinary kind. There is no pretence to anything like practical religion. Take, for instance, twenty, fifty, or a hundred boys of the usual character in an ordinary establishment. It will not be considered uncharitable if we say that some of those boys, perhaps the majority, will be either CRUEL, DECEPTIVE, UNTRUTHFUL, or UNCLEAN. Any way, if we suppose that they are not in these senses immoral, they will be, as a rule, thorough haters of anything like real godliness, and unceasing tormentors of any boy who might come in amongst them determined to live like Jesus Christ.

Let any reader of this book who has ever been to boarding school – especially a boys' school – stop and think of the hurricane of abuse and ridicule, which is harder to endure than open persecution, which any Salvationist or any child would meet with who was determined to practise the first principles of Christianity. Yet fathers and mothers take their children, on whom they have lavished, it may be, years of anxious

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prayerful training, and throw them into this seething, hissing whirlpool of depravity and scorn, and leave them there to protect themselves – unlike the Pitcairn Islanders, in this respect, for these do stand by and watch their darlings, and when they are a little exhausted, pull them out and take them home, and strengthen and encourage them for another plunge. But these children are left for months to float or sink, and then – most marvellous delusion of all – they are expected not only to survive the perilous experiment, but to be happy in it, and to come out better boys or girls than they go in – nay, some go further, and expect they are coming out Christians, and more fully qualified to endure the future temptations and trials of life. Jesus Christ taught His disciples, and through them He teaches all parents, to pray that their children may not be led into temptation. How can any parent who daily offers this prayer, go with it on his lips, and place his young, tender, susceptible, inexperienced children face to face with temptations so strong, so subtle, so well adapted to overcome and lead them into present evil and future destruction, that the devil himself could not very well contrive any more so?

There are temptations for every unconverted child, as there are for every unconverted man and woman, before which, if brought into direct contact, it is a dead certainty that both man and child will go down. The wisest plan for men and women, then, who can see the danger ahead of them, must be to keep out of it by avoiding the very temptation to evil. And it must be the wisest and, we think, the only benevolent course, for parents, as far as possible, to keep the feet of their ignorant little children out of paths where they can plainly see so great a likelihood of their being led astray. What will those parents say for themselves in the last day, who, instead of labouring to keep their children out of temptation, for some supposed advantages deliberately lead them into it?

20. Do not many of the foregoing observations apply with equal force to the companionships into which children may be brought in visiting or in receiving visits from relatives and friends?

Yes, certainly. Persons not decidedly godly should not be allowed, even if relatives, to come into close and continuous association with children. The influence of relatives is likely to be great for good or evil just because of the relationship. The sayings and

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doings of uncles and aunts and grandparents will exercise a far greater influence over the hearts of children than will the life and conduct of strangers. They will think a great deal more of it all, and consequently be far more likely to remember and imitate it.

How important it is, then, that such examples and influences should be all in favour of that which is holy, useful, and good! Yet we all know how common a thing it is for the parents of children to consider that there is a sort of necessity, on the ground of relationship, for them to receive into their homes, on lengthened visits, unsaved, worldly aunts, cousins, and relatives to the third and fourth generations. Nay, not only is this custom strangely allowed in the face of the risk run, but often tolerated and continued when it is known that these relatives exert an actual influence for evil over the children. The monstrous folly of this course we need not attempt to describe. It is indescribable!

21. Does not the last question equally apply to children paying visits to relatives and friends?

Yes. Many parents who are most anxious that their children should be godly, and who are fully aware of their susceptibility to worldly influences, nevertheless thoughtlessly send them to stay with relatives or friends who are either lukewarm professors, pleasure-seeking worldlings, or altogether godless. Then, when their children develop tastes and habits foreign to what they have for years been seeking to form within them, they profess to be very much surprised and grieved. If, as it has already been said, parents will make opportunities for the enemy to sow broadcast the seeds of evil, they must not be surprised if, at the harvest-time, they find the toil and anxieties of years marred and undone.

22. But may not parents ask the question, "Where are we to send our children for change, if not to those of our own relatives and personal friends who will be pleased to see them, take care of their health, do it without charge to us, and, moreover, be offended if we refuse to allow them to do so?"

To this, without hesitation, we reply that it is preferable, if it needs be, that the health of your children should suffer, and that they should be without change, and that your



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relatives and friends should take offence – if they are weak and foolish enough to do so – rather than you should have your children contaminated by the conversation and example of those, whether friends or relatives, children or adults, who are not THOROUGHLY THE LORD'S.

23. But would not such fears and timidity prove that the training given the children was not very thorough if its effect could be so readily endangered? In other words, would not such fears prove the religion of the children to be of a very gingerbread kind, if a few days' or weeks, intercourse with those not equally decided could endanger or destroy it?

No; it would only prove that you understand the hearts and habits of children. It would also show that you are aware how easily they are influenced in consequence of their tender years and inexperience; that, not being fully established in the faith, you are not willing that they should be exposed to any unnecessary temptation, and that you are determined to shield them to the utmost of your power and opportunity. It would prove also that you are consistent, and that you honestly and supremely prefer, as you say you do, that your children should be good, and holy and Christlike, to all earthly comforts and advantages.