

Maternalism the Coming Great Force in Government

Katherine Bement Davis, After Taming 1,400 Wild Convicts in Three Days by "Motherly Methods," Discusses the Efficiency of the Slipper, the Dark Closet and All the Ways of "Wise Motherhood" in Controlling Criminals and Running Cities, States and Countries.

By Katherine Bement Davis, Commissioner of Corrections of the City of New York



Dr. Katherine Bement Davis, Commissioner of Corrections, Who Quelled a Mutiny of 1,400 Men by Maternal Methods.

WHEN I helped to quell the mutiny of fourteen hundred men at Blackwell's Island I did only what may be expected and must be demanded in the government of the future. I injected into municipal affairs the maternal instinct. I adjusted a difficult and unpleasant situation by applying the methods of motherhood.

Criminals are not merely "like bad boys." They are bad boys and they must be treated as such. It was with this profound belief, amounting to a conviction, that I answered the summons of the Warden of Blackwell's Island to come over and settle the trouble. Warden Hayes put it too modestly, for he should have said "help to settle the trouble."

In this case, as in all other matters of government, the maternal element is needed to supplement the paternal. God made a world not of men, nor of women, but of men and women. He expects them to conduct the affairs of the world together, not that one sex shall be relegated to a gallery seat to watch the performance on the stage of another. Women were not made to cheer men, nor to criticize them, but to help them. Until women help in the affairs of government we will have, if not bad, certainly very faulty government.

As Professor Vida D. Scudder, of Wellesley, has said in a recent copy of the Yale Review, "Paternalism has become an obnoxious epithet; it carries with it, from patriarchal days, an unpleasant hint of autocracy. Maternalism is better. The word stands for an authority more tender, a discipline more intimate, fostering care more humble. To carry out this great idea the Mother-State of which we dream will need the help of its women."

Professor Scudder further says that Mother-State will "transform society from the likeness of a battle field to the likeness of a home," and she adds that it is the instinct behind such personifications as Liberty with her torch, Columbia, ample, and motherly. Alma Mater—"No Alma Mater could ever have called for such loyalty from the alumni"—which will recognize and use the feminine factor in the State of the future.

Men and women are not very much alike. They are in matters of character and methods of administration considerably unlike, and will remain so as the maple tree will continue to be unlike the pine. Because of these very differences they need each other's supplemental aid and influence. For instance women have a lighter touch in human affairs. Lighter, but no less firm. To illustrate this let us study the methods of a father and mother in dealing with a boy. He is making a noise and disturbing the occupants of the room. "Keep quiet," the father says. If the boy dares to ask "Why," he may receive a spanking. At any rate the answer is gruff. "Because I have said you should" will be the only reason vouchsafed him.

The mother's tactics will be different. She, of the alleged unreasoning sex, will reason with him. She will say: "Because you will make the neighbors angry," or "Because grandma is

taking a nap, or "Because mother's head aches." She will give a reason, and the child's hungry mind will be satisfied. He will love and trust his mother. His father he will privately or publicly regard as a tyrant.

One of the prisoners at Blackwell's proved this. When he told his wrongs he said: "I stood up on a bench and wanted to talk. The head keeper told me to sit down. When I didn't sit down he swore at me. Now do you think he should have sworn at me?" I told him that in the circumstances I believed that the head keeper's expletive was justifiable, though I myself never say more than "darn."

This head keeper is a mild-mannered man, and only under great stress would he have lapsed into profanity, I believe. But I use the instance to illustrate a man's methods, the methods of paternal government.

One reason why the maternal influence and aid are needed in government is found in the extreme suggestibility of criminals. They are far more amenable to suggestion than to authority. How suggestible are children! A child is crying. You say to him, "See the funny dog going by." He looks out of the window. He forgets his woes. His tears are dried. In another moment he is laughing. Suggest new methods of adjustment of differences to criminals and they will welcome them. Scowl at them with a "because" for answer and they will plot an upsetting of order and upheaval of public peace. Arbitrariness makes anarchists. The tyrant makes the rebel.

Another reason, an all-powerful one, is that all criminals are strong individualists. So are all children. The criminal thinks of himself and of what is best, or he thinks is best for him. The child, too, is an individualist of the most pronounced type. In his earliest stages he is one large stomach and a loud voice. He, too, must be taught to think not of his own good solely, but of the good of the group, his group, the family circle, and as his mental vision widens, of the good of his schoolmates, his friends, society, the world. Social consciousness is asleep in the criminal as it is in the child. It must be awakened and after it is awakened, trained.

The best mother is the one who plays and studies with her child. Believing this, knowing it by instinct as well as reason, I sent no messages about what to do when the mutiny broke out at Blackwell's.

When I was in charge of the Girls' Home, at Bedford, I did not say, "Do this," but "Let us do this." I did it with them. I worked in the garden and painted the buildings with the girls and took a hand in the housework. It worked well there and I expected it to work at Blackwell's. It did. I sang with the boys at the services, and I talked matters over with them, not from a height but with a family spirit of "What's to be done? Let's talk it over." To one of the men I said, "What would you do if

you were a keeper and the boys had broken out in this way?" He said: "I would have them shot if they didn't behave." He was a good boy after that. His social consciousness had awakened by what he himself thought out and expressed in our conference. It is a monitor system in schools. Put the worst boy in a position of trust and he will not abuse it.

The only thing I didn't take to Blackwell's Island was my slipper. A rebuke that amounted to a slipper, that had all of its settling force, came about when one of the men who had been in several prisons and knew all about it told me just how prisons ought to be run. When he had finished I said:

"It's too bad you are in here, because if you were out you ought to be the warden or commissioner and run things yourself."

He joined in the laugh of the others and settled down.

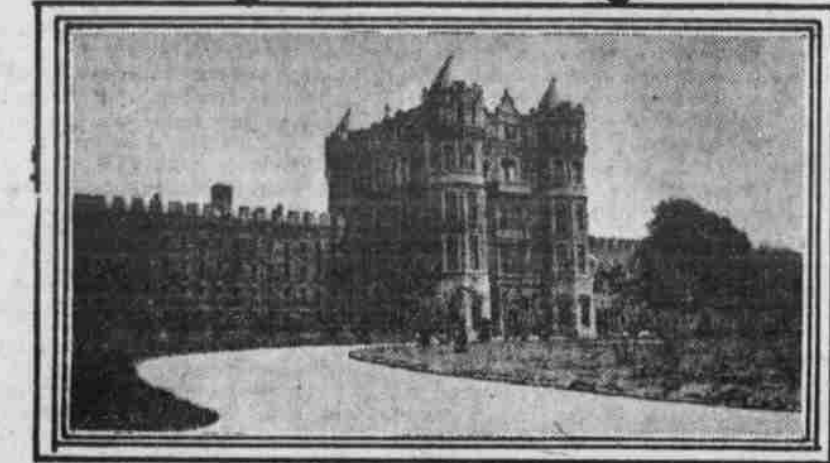
Every mother knows the salutary effect upon youth of "going to bed without supper." I found the diet system very effectual with the men who held out longest at Blackwell's Island, and, to paraphrase the old adage, you can reach a man's reason through his stomach. Fasting conduces to quick and sane decisions.

The dark closet is a well-known last resort of the disciplinarian mother. Our "coolers" served well that purpose at Blackwell's. And yet the "coolers" are not half so terrifying as the men's imagination of them. They are like the other cells, save that the other cells have no walls separating them. They call occupancy of them solitary confinement and yet every man has his neighbor within hearing distance. One terror of the "cooler" is that it contains no bed. The man must reflect in an upright position. For this reason the "cooler" serves yet another disciplinary purpose akin to the regimen of childhood. A sentence to it means to the rebellious criminal what the order "Johnny, stand in the corner and turn your face to the wall" means to the child.

I do not believe in emotionalism with either of the undeveloped classes, children or criminals. At least, I do not believe in misdirected emotionalism, because the results gained through such avenues to the brain and will are not stable.

When I told the men I didn't like their striped suits because they made them look like zebras they laughed. But I said that the new drab suits would be worn only by the well behaved, the honor men.

I have been asked whether I was not afraid to go to Blackwell's Island. No, I was not afraid. But let me explain my conception of fear. I realized, as any thoughtful woman would, that there was a possibility of violence. I knew that I was facing danger. But I knew this when I faced the men at the penitentiary when they broke line and demanded to be heard. I said, "First back into line. I will not hear a word until there is order. After that you may tell me your grievances."



Blackwells Island, Where the Woman Commissioner of Corrections Gave Her Object Lesson in Wise Motherhood Applied to Government.

Group of the "Bad Boys of Blackwell's Island," Whom Dr. Davis Has Promised New Drab Suits if They Will Earn Them by Good Conduct.

Of course I knew that anyone of those angry rebels against order could have crushed me. But my thought was "What if I am killed? This is a bigger thing than any mere bodily safety."

And so I thought and felt when I went to Blackwell's Island. The general who leads an army has a very good chance of being shot, but he must take that hazard. Matters were serious at Blackwell's and whether or not I was killed in the melee was a minor consideration. Something was to be done and I set forth to do it. That was all.

But do not believe that because I advocated maternalism in government that my methods were those of gentleness. I stood before the men and said, and saying meant, "Men, we must first have order. We will have order if I have to call out the militia." That brought what was most needed, silence and attention. The men knew that I meant what I said. Having secured their attention, I told them that I was ready to hear their story of grievances. I told them that each tier of men should select a representative to expound the rights and complain of the wrongs of his tier. After I had listened to these spokesmen I gave each individual a chance to tell his own story. This seemed to show them what I sought, was justice for all. This is an universal appeal. It reaches all undeveloped, criminals, alike. The men began to quiet down.

Then I explained to them the need of law and order. I told them that without obedience and self-control they could get nowhere, do nothing. Slowly, one by one, they came to agree with me. It was not a victory of the emotions. I had reached them through the channels of reason. It was an instance of mind meeting mind.

It is a matter of gratification, far wider than the purely personal, that I have received hundreds of letters from the mothers of the boys at Blackwell's Island, saying: "We are so glad that there is a woman looking after the boys on the Island. We feel that they are safer and will come out better men because a woman is looking after them as a mother might. For a woman understands."

I would not welcome a new matriarchy. But I would see women shoulder to shoulder working with men for the city's good. Many

offices in the city's housekeeping could be efficiently filled by women. We need the element of the woman's point of view. I know no woman whom I know would make a good mayor, but I doubt not but there are such women. I understand there are some good women mayors of towns in the West.

Nor should the assistance of women be denied in the national housekeeping. Women's views and voice should assist in the councils of the nation. In that larger sphere as in the municipal lesser, women will be effective not only in the prevention but in the correction of crime. She will recognize the criminal not as a monstrosity to be eliminated from the scheme of life but a case of arrested or warped development that must be led into better things. Her mother instinct and experience will teach her the truth that the way to deal with criminals is to divide them into groups and administer to each group according to its needs. That is the reason the cottage system in prisons is succeeding. It is the principle of keeping children of various degrees of development in classes by themselves.

They will know that the criminal must be treated with firmness of good motherhood. Not that foolish motherhood that bribes children to cease their naughtiness in hope of reward as some unfit mothers persuade a child to stop scratching the face of another by offering the culprit candy. But by demanding compliance with the law then explaining its necessity and justifying, and, when necessary, amending it.

The method of wise motherhood are what government most needs. Firmness unshakable, but with understanding and a disposition to hear the other side. Not one-sidedness, but both-sidedness. A man who witnessed the rise and fall of the rebellion of the bad boys at Blackwell's Island listened while I talked with the boys. "Man's methods with the edges rounded," he said.

He said, "It was when you told them that order must be restored and that after that you would hear their stories and if there were any wrongs you would try to find means to adjust them that the mutiny wavered. It was at that point they broke."

By this experiment was maternalism in government justified.

Chesterton Tells Why New Countries Are Not Interesting to Him

By G. K. CHESTERTON, The Famous English Essayist.

THE modern journalism has long been growing as mysterious as hieroglyphics; but wherever (for one moment) it is not mysterious, it is highly symbolic. Which also is like a hieroglyphic. I call this example from a current daily paper; quoting it simply as it stands—

Two excellent releases, one of which is calculated to make a strong appeal to lovers of the historic, will shortly appear at the khemas. These are "Physical Culture in Australia," depicting a girls' gymnastic class at drill and exercise, and "Famous Churches of England."

Now I have no doubt that the writer of this paragraph meant that the historic interest was in the English churches, not in the Australian gymnasts. But it seems to me that the mere order, being a matter of instinct, is important. And I wonder how many readers did not feel it fully natural that the gymnasts should be mentioned in such a connection. Also wonder how many people know what a release is: because I don't. But something in the wording of the sentence gave me a snatch at that overhanging lost clue—the clue that leads to the central riddle and the central

failure of Imperialism. And what I feel applies just as much to independent Anglo-Saxon America as to our estimable young colonies that still fly the old flag.

Why are the old countries alive, and the new countries dead? In other words, why would most of us rather look at a church crumbling in Essex, than at a class drilling in Australia? To a healthy man, girls from Australia are an inspiring sight, like girls from America or anywhere for that matter; those who do not understand that do not understand morality. On the other hand, churches in Essex are, if anything, rather a depressing sight. All along the East Anglian coasts (but more in Suffolk and Norfolk) can be found the shrunken town almost covered by the shadow of its huge church-tower.

It dates from the time when all that rural England was rich, and could build what was once a cathedral over what is now a hamlet. Even in these the remains of religious civilization have been battered by sectarianism and betrayed by neglect; and are therefore, in a sense, a sad sight. Yet why do you and I (or most certainly I) think them as cheerful as "Pickwick" when they are compared with their rival: when falls on our ears the cold and hollow words, "Physical Culture in Australia?"

If anyone says he does not feel this, he is deficient in culture—or in candour. Australian ladies and American ladies are beautifully trained; and English churches are abominably neglected. But, after all, the test of the issue

between Central Civilization and Colonial Civilization is which goes to which. It is the cleverest and most successful son of a Colonial family who is encouraged to see the magic of Venice or the glory that was Greece.

It is not the cleverest or most successful son of a European family, certainly not of an English family, who is encouraged to see the magic of Melbourne, or the glory that was Botany Bay, the skyscrapers of New York or the ranches of Texas. No colony, so far as I know, has ever become permanently greater than the principality that really founded it. Holland is still larger than Java; so much larger that it does not occur to us to compare them on the map. Spain is still larger than Peru. And the brute fact of history is still the exact opposite of Mr. Kipling's epigram: it is "What do they know of Empire who do not England know?"

But as I think I remarked, the real use of reason is to find the meaning of instinct. It is very often the justification of it. And I think this can be found in the case we here discuss. It is not easy to define our instinct about the English churches and the Australian girls. Most men avoid churches. Most men do not avoid girls. And yet the instinct remains rigid; and is a reality.

So far as I can see, the distinction is in a simple but not sufficiently familiar fact. One cannot find any new things in the new countries. One can quite seriously find new things in the old churches. The only absolutely original thing that ever came out of Australia was the boomerang. And that had been ir-

vented by the savages without a word of assistance from a white man.

There is one other original thing that has come out of Australia; the caricatures of Mr. Will Dyson. But this also is something of a boomerang; for so young a genius could not have been so bitter unless the social conditions in his birthplace were almost as abominable as in ours. But instinctively we all feel that no such sudden novelty will come out of "Physical Culture in Australia." The girl at drill and exercise may swing a club; but she will not sling it like a boomerang. It will not (at least) kill the instructor and then return gracefully to her own graceful hand.

There is nothing savage about "Physical Culture in Australia." Nor would she, if asked to draw a diagram on the blackboard, draw anything that could for one moment be mistaken for one of Mr. Dyson's cartoons. In other words, the Colonial society, with all its other superiorities, very seldom has the note of novelty, as compared with its parent society. Girls' gymnastic classes in Sydney may be new, but probably not so new as they were in Suburton. We do not really feel that we should find anything fresh in such new schools. And that is exactly what we feel we may find in the old churches.

I give in this case, as in the other, an instance as it occurs. In any first-class carriage you may meet a man who thinks that Bacon wrote Shakespeare; and he will probably tell you long before you have pulled the communication-card that Bacon was a secret master of the Rosicrucians. In any third-class carriage

you may meet an angry Irishman who maintains that such secret societies still exist, and are a poison in politics. He will quote, for example, the Orange Lodges of Belfast. But both these fanatics, though a trifle tiresome when taken in large quantities, refer back to the fact that there really have been secret societies in Europe ever since the Eleusinian Mysteries, and long before.

Now, anybody walking up the Strand can turn a corner and walk into the Temple of the Templars. They were the knot that was cut, very cruelly, upon this precise allegation. The Templars were accused of seeking to govern society by wealth and by a secret. If they had a secret it has never been found. If they hadn't a secret—well, I suppose it will be found.

But of that mere problem of the power of a secret society, we are much more likely to get information from an old church than from a Colonial gymnastic class. The problem has been a highly modern one, from the days of the Camorra to the days of the Black Hand. Yet there is not one single old church in England, or in Italy, or France, or South Germany that may not contain some touch or turn of the chisel or the brush that would reveal the whole truth about the terrible mystery of the Templars.

That, I think, is why we see again theparable of the old pagan sage. Colonialists and Americans come to cathedrals; cathedrals do not run after Colonialists and Americans. The only solution I can suggest is that the new societies have no mysteries.